

COMMENT

1768

THE COLLECTS.

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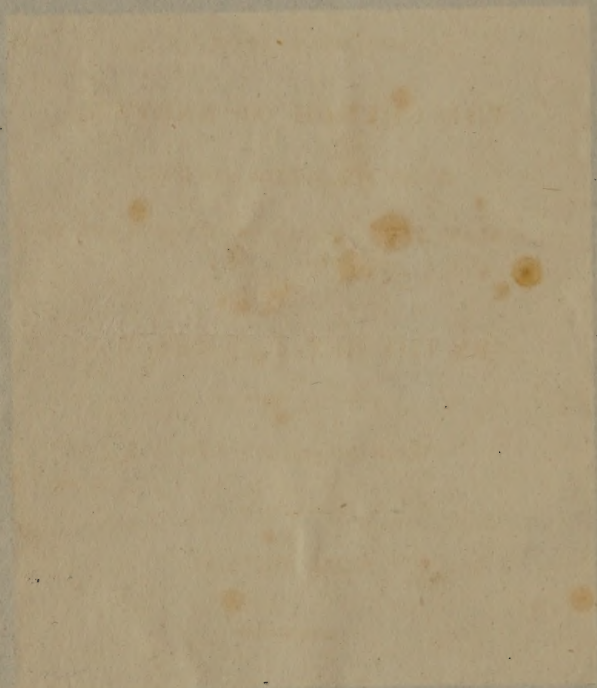
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1868





A  
COMMENT  
UPON  
THE COLLECTS,

APPOINTED TO BE USED IN

THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

BEFORE THE EPISTLE AND GOSPEL

ON SUNDAYS AND HOLIDAYS THROUGHOUT THE YEAR.

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BY THE REV. J. JAMES, M.A.

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“ Watch unto prayer.” 1 Pet. iv. 7

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THIRD EDITION.

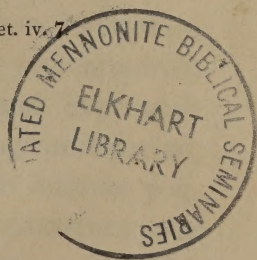
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# DEDICATION

TO THE

## FIRST EDITION.

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TO THE

## PARISHIONERS OF OUNDLE.

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To you this work is dedicated.

My choice of subject has been determined not only by the wish of drawing your attention to the collects, as beautiful and impressive prayers, but also by the pleasing anticipation, that when thus endeavouring to instruct you, I might, through your assistance, instruct your children also.

True it is, that my reflections in the following pages are not adapted particularly or even generally to children: they are rather intended to encourage in yourselves, "watch-

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“fulness unto prayer” amid the distractions of life, and to aid your fervency therein, when as sorrow drives you to supplication, or joy leads you to thanksgiving, you bow before the Lord your Maker.

When however you teach your children, on each returning Sabbath, to repeat the Collect appointed for the day, it will be neither an unwelcome, nor, I trust, an unprofitable office for you to enlarge any idea suggested by me, and improve it in the manner most suitable to the age or capacity of the child before you.

Nor imagine that you can too early “suffer little children” thus to come unto Christ. You know not the sorrows, the temptations, and consequent dangers to which your children may be exposed amid the changes and chances of the world; but you *do* know, that God is the only Being who can comfort them in sorrow, strengthen them against temptation, or deliver them from danger. Therefore by teaching them to pray, you teach them *that*, which *hereafter* may be their salvation. As Abel by *his* work of faith\*, so you by *yours*,

\* Heb. xi. 4.



though dead, will yet speak. The lessons of *early* piety will be remembered long after you shall have been called hence. Their memory passeth not away. Many, to whom in the time of trouble God has been a refuge and consolation, have blessed the mother, who in their childhood crowned all her love by forming their hearts to adoration, and their lips to prayer. I say, "*the Mother*," because the first training of the soul for heaven is a maternal office. The Mother it is, who presides over those home virtues, the cultivation or neglect of which in the first ages of life, often gives a right or wrong bias to its after-years. Let her so preside with unforgetting solicitude and undiscouraged perseverance. Even when adverse circumstances occur—and against such neither anxious foresight, nor active piety can always guard—the Christian Mother does not relax her endeavours; does not suffer her faith to fail. Her duty is not more imperative in its principle, than encouraging in its performance. She is animated by a conviction, founded upon experience, that a heart is seldom, *very* seldom, so reprobate, as to throw from it the old forms, and close-knit habits of filial piety.

Indeed, generally speaking, *Character* is formed by *maternal* influence—an influence, whose importance is incalculable. It is the earliest; it is the most natural: it strikes deepest root. Years of active engagement in a busy world may for a time choke its growth; it has however a vitality, which, when called into action by sickness, or sorrow, or approaching death, and fostered by the dew of God's blessing, blossoms and gives fruit—even fruit unto holiness; the end whereof is everlasting life.

These are *not* the suggestions of *fancy*. That maternal influence, well and perseveringly directed, carries with it reality of blessing, none can more truly testify than myself. Nor can I on this occasion call to mind how much I owe to a Mother—now numbered with the dead—or recur to past years of unwearied affection and unremitted watchfulness, without avowing my fervent gratitude for the example she has left me of her virtues, which are ever fresh in my recollection, and my unceasing admiration of which I cannot forbear thus recording.

In accepting this my endeavour in your service, you will consider the work with in-

dulgence, as the fruit of what little leisure falls to my share in the midst of active duties which daily rest upon me.

Your sincere friend,

JOHN JAMES,

CURATE OF OUNDLE.

*March 1, 1824.*

\* \* \* *The Reader will observe a similarity in some of the comments, and the notes subjoined to them ; but this is unavoidable from the similarity in their corresponding Collects.*

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*There is an Index at the end of the volume.*



## COLLECTS.

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### 1. FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT.

*ALMIGHTY God, give us grace that we may cast away the works of darkness, and put upon us the armour of light, now in the time of this mortal life, in which thy Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility, that in the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious majesty, to judge both the quick and dead, we may rise to the life immortal, through him who liveth and reigneth, with thee and the Holy Ghost, now and ever. Amen.*

ADVENT is a word which signifies *Coming*. It is here applied to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ; who *came*, in the fulness of time, according to God's appointment, to redeem the world. At this *first coming* he visited us in great humility, as<sup>1</sup> is signified in the Gospel of this day<sup>1</sup>; and *in every particular* exactly answered to the description which the Prophets<sup>2</sup> had given of *him*, whom God would send as the promised Redeemer. At the end of the

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xxi. 5.

<sup>2</sup> Principally the Prophet Isaiah, who is therefore called the "Evangelical" or "Gospel Prophet."

world he will come again in a different character ; even as a glorious King, to judge both the quick and the dead : which *second Coming* is called his second *Advent*.

The term *Darkness* is expressive sometimes of *Ignorance*, sometimes of *Wickedness* ; in the present instance, of *both*. For, at the time of the Messiah's advent, the generality of mankind were deeply sunk, both in *ignorance* and *wickedness*. Uncertain what worship God required of *them*, or what degree of regard *they* might expect from *him*, either in their present or their future state of existence, they were *ignorant*<sup>1</sup> of their duty ; it is no wonder then that they were also *wicked* in practice<sup>2</sup>. Though some of the heathens professed a regard for the attainment of wisdom and the practice of virtue, and were themselves eminently wise and virtuous ; yet their virtues were practised generally with a view to human applause ; and their wisdom, not carrying them to the knowledge of true religion, was but foolishness with God. Of that virtue, which refers every thing good, or great, or laudable, to him who dwelleth above ; and of that wisdom, which maketh men wise unto salvation, by making them children of God's grace, sharers of his love, and inheritors of his kingdom through the atonement of His Son ;—of such virtue and of such wisdom they were ignorant. And this ignorance is spoken of by the Prophet as darkness : “ darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people<sup>3</sup>.” When Jesus Christ came—the day-star from on high—He

<sup>1</sup> Acts xvii. 23.

<sup>2</sup> Prov. iv. 19.

<sup>3</sup> Isaiah lx. 2.

rose, not only a glory to his people Israel, but a *light* to lighten the Gentiles,—a light to lighten even *us*.

The comparison of light with knowledge, and darkness with ignorance, is here very properly applied. For as the light of the sun drives away the darkness of night, shews us what is our daily work, points out the dangers which may oppose us in the prosecution of it, and gives us opportunity to take means of avoiding them; so by the light of his *word* in the Gospel, Jesus Christ, the Sun<sup>1</sup> of Righteousness, enables us to see and to escape the dangers of sin, and to work out our own salvation; which is our daily *work* as Christians. Thus David calls the word of God, “a lamp unto his feet, and a light “unto his path<sup>2</sup> ;” “The commandment of the “Lord is pure, and *giveth light unto the eyes*<sup>3</sup>.” And St. Paul, in the Epistle for the day, declares to the Romans, that the Night of Heathen Ignorance was far spent: the Day of Salvation,—the Light of Divine Knowledge,—was at hand: in the fulness of which guiding and cheering light *we* live. For in whatever situation we find ourselves placed amid the varied conditions of life, and among its unceasing fluctuations, the Word of God, and the example of his blessed Son, will direct us how to act in it. However we may be perplexed with difficulties, temporal or spiritual, before God or man, we have only to turn to the Holy Scriptures; and there we shall instantly find some direction, by following which we may see and guide our way safely, if we

<sup>1</sup> Malachi iv. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Psalm cxix. 105.

<sup>3</sup> Psalm xix. 8.

will accept the guidance. The precepts of the Gospel are suited to us in joy or in sorrow, in sickness or in health, under adversity and oppression, or in the days of prosperity and power : They will always guide us into the straight path of duty, and keep us in the way of *Spiritual* peace. We have also the example of our merciful Redeemer for our instruction and humble imitation. By his own actual conduct in his human character, he shows us how *we also* may practise every modification of the Christian graces ; from Faith before God to Charity before man.

The object of this beautiful prayer therefore is, that we may be enlightened by the Word of God, and enabled, by Divine Grace, to lead a holy life. So enlightened, we shall be neither *ignorant* of duty, nor *wicked* in practice ; but knowing Jesus Christ to be the Saviour of the world, and defended from the evil of sin by the armour of spiritual light, we shall live in the knowledge of the true God ; in faith in his Son ; in fellowship with his Spirit<sup>1</sup>. We shall be steady in our obedience to his laws, as our Father who is in heaven : who thence seeth, clearer than light<sup>2</sup>, all we do, whether for evil, or for good ; who taketh account even of our thoughts : who will hereafter judge the quick and the dead by that Man whom he hath ordained ; and who, finally, will lead those who have done good, into life eternal ; and will cast those who have done evil, into everlasting fire.

<sup>1</sup> Rom. viii. 16.

<sup>2</sup> 1 John i. 5. " God is light, and in him is no darkness at all."



Thus to live, is to walk, *not* in darkness, but in light; not in wickedness or ignorance, but in knowledge and holiness: not in danger, but in safety; not in a weak apprehension of the probable dangers of this present life, but in an awful dread of the terrors of an hereafter—not a slave to the fears or the hopes of this perishing world, but restrained by the fears, and free to the hopes of another and a better world, which passeth not away. Thus to hold our course through this state of probation, is to live wise unto salvation, and sanctified as Children of the Highest; supported under every trial of a patient faith, by the animating hope, that at the *second* Advent of the Son of Man, when he shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him—when he shall sit upon the throne of his glory—when, before him shall be gathered all nations—when, in the awful moment of final doom, he shall separate the evil and the good—the one from another—He who will then be our *Judge*, may prove in his undeserved and unbounded Mercy, our *Saviour* also.

## 2. SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT.

*BLESSED Lord, who hast caused all Holy Scriptures to be written for our learning; grant that we may in such wise hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them; that by patience and comfort of thy holy word, we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which thou hast given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.*

THE *former* part of this Collect declares that all holy Scriptures are written for our learning: a declaration founded upon the assurance of St. Paul, in the *Epistle* annexed to it, that “whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning: that through patience” in well-doing, “and comfort of the Scriptures,” under virtuous sufferings, “we might have hope.”

The *latter* part leads our minds to the contemplation of a future life, and is in conformity with the *Gospel* for the day; which, whilst it describes, with all their terrific signs, the latter days of Jerusalem, and foretels its destruction by the Roman armies—does also foreshadow those terrors which will usher in the day of final Judgment.

The main scope of what we learn from the holy Scriptures is this; that Almighty God has uniformly willed the happiness of mankind, and notwithstanding the fall of his erring creatures, has in all his

dispensations had in view their restoration, through the atonement of his Son Jesus Christ.

It follows, therefore, that, by a proper use of the Scriptures, and by a humble dependence upon the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit in our application of them, we may find in them freedom from sin, and power unto holiness—our sweetest consolation here, and “eternal life” hereafter.

To this end, we are to *hear* them, as read and explained by the appointed Ministers of Christ <sup>1</sup>.

Then, for the better understanding the Scriptures thus heard, we are afterwards, according as we are able, *to read—mark—learn—and inwardly digest* them.

Now these *four* terms very clearly shew the natural progress of religious knowledge, in the humble and diligent enquirer after truth.

1st. He *Reads*, in obedience to the divine command, “Search the Scriptures—for in them ye “think ye have eternal life.” Hence he dare not neglect to read and study those Scriptures; because he would then disobey, and consequently offend, his heavenly Father. He reads these sacred oracles, because he knows there is no other safe guide for his daily conduct—no other unfailing resource in

<sup>1</sup> Thus Godfathers and Godmothers are earnestly exhorted in our Baptismal service, to call upon the Children, for whose advancement in a religious course they have made themselves responsible—to hear sermons.

Our Church, both in this Collect and in the Baptismal service, founds her instruction upon the reasoning of St. Paul, Rom. x. 14. “How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? “and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? “and how shall they hear without a preacher?”

time of need—no other sure refuge<sup>1</sup> from the storms of life. In his closet, therefore, and with his family, he begins every day with reading the word of God.

*2ndly*, He *Marks* what he reads: that is—he observes wherein the several dealings of God with man can be applied to *himself*—either when he needs his faith to be strengthened—or when he requires patience or comfort under any trouble, whether of mind, body, or estate. He is like one, who having found some favoured spot, whereon the healing plant doth grow, or the fruitful tree doth flourish, *marks* it as a place, whereunto he may always resort, find medicine to heal his sickness<sup>2</sup>, and refreshment to keep his soul in life. By such *marked Reading*, with a teachable Spirit, he

*3rdly*, *Learns* there his Duty, in prosperity and adversity, in health and in sickness, in life and in death. He learns that, as in God is his strength, so also that from the Spirit of God only, he can find safe guidance and protection. He proceeds accordingly by diligent prayer, to ask for that Spirit, and by diligent endeavour to co-operate with its aid<sup>3</sup>: reading, that he may learn; and praying, that what he learns, he may apply.

This holy exercise of himself, will draw forth the sting of sin, and so deeply fix in his mind the obligations of a Christian life, in conformity with

<sup>1</sup> Isaiah xxv. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Without this spiritual medicine, we are still in sin and unquiet. It is the truly scriptural doctrine of our church, that when we speak of our state as labouring under sin, and living *independently* of the *Grace of God*; our confession should be—"there is no Health in us—no *spiritual* health.."

<sup>3</sup> Luke xi. 9.



the revealed word, that he may very properly be said,

*4thly, Inwardly to Digest the Word*—the “Bread of life,”—making it a part of himself as it were—inasmuch as he makes it the principle of all his Actions, and the spring of all his Motives: *That*—which gives Vigour to *resolve* upon a holy course,—and Strength, day by day, to *persevere* in it, even to the end.

If God grant the petition, offered up in this full sense of it, we shall be enabled, not only to receive *outwardly* in profession, but to keep fixed *inwardly* in our hearts, and there hold fast—the blessed hope of everlasting life. With this hope as our anchor, the storms of life—its difficulties, its disappointments—may rage around us; but we shall be safe from destruction. None make shipwreck of their Faith, who have this anchor of the soul, sure and stedfast<sup>1</sup>. *He* in whom we trust, rules the elements equally of the moral and the natural world—restrains alike the restlessness of human passion, and the stormy wind and tempest. The violence of evil, therefore, cannot exceed the bounds which he ordains. If perplexities distress us, even when we walk with God, we must remember, that though the Disciples were with Christ himself, the tempest threatened, and they feared to perish. His presence did not avert the storm, but his influence was thereby the more strikingly displayed, in controlling the fury he had permitted, and evidencing his omnipotence by bidding the stormy elements to cease and

<sup>1</sup> Heb. vi. 19.

be still. So also do we surely know, that, if the same great Being permit evil to surround and terrify us, he may seem to sleep in the storm, but in his own time he will arise in the calm majesty of omnipotence, and rebuke the wind and the waves—out of evil he will bring good. His holy word of truth does itself testify—that “all things work together for good to them that love God<sup>1</sup>.”



### 3. THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT.

*O LORD Jesu Christ, who, at thy first coming, didst send thy messenger to prepare thy way before thee; grant that the ministers and stewards of thy mysteries, may likewise so prepare and make ready thy way, by turning the hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; that at thy second coming to judge the world, we may be found an acceptable people in thy sight, who livest and reignest, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, ever one God, world without end. Amen.*

WHEN a Sovereign visits any distant part of his dominions, he is usually preceded by messengers of various ranks to announce his coming; in order that preparation may be made to receive him with due respect and honour.

In allusion to this custom, Jesus Christ, as a Spiritual King, did send before him *His* messenger—

<sup>1</sup> Rom. viii. 28.

John the Baptist—to declare his Advent, and prepare the minds of men to receive him with the honour due from subjects to their King; shewing a steady and cheerful compliance with the laws he should give them, and living in a peaceable subjection to his Will in all things<sup>1</sup>.

The *spiritual* king chose to be preceded by *one* messenger only, of lowly station, clothed with raiment of camel's hair, and bound with a leathern girdle about his loins<sup>2</sup>. So humble a mode of declaring himself was purposely chosen by our Lord, early to impress upon the minds of men this truth, that *his* "kingdom is not of this world." His object was to reign in, and rule over, the *hearts* of mankind; that by rooting out the evil passions and selfish dispositions which lurked there—enemies of God, and destroyers of the soul—he might gradually nurture, in their stead, the fruits of the Spirit—"love "to God, good will towards men." When, therefore, John the Baptist entered upon his ministry, and began to make straight the way for establishing this spiritual kingdom, he preached Repentance<sup>3</sup>, as the first step towards a good and holy life. They who would "learn to do well, must first cease to do "evil:"—they must cease to obey the prince of dark-

<sup>1</sup> Jesus Christ *confirmed* the moral law, as delivered aforetime in the writings of the Old Testament—"Think not that I am come to "destroy the Law, or the Prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to "fulfil."—Matt. v. 17. And he gave men the *new* and more perfect law of the Gospel. John xiii. 34. and Matt. v. 48.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. iii. 4. See the Comment upon the Collect for St. John Baptist's day; towards the end of the Volume.

<sup>3</sup> Matt. iii. 2.

ness, if they would live under the dominion and protection of Jesus Christ, *himself* the Lord of light and life.

With strict propriety, then, our Church offers up her prayer, that as the chosen messenger of the Messiah prepared for the *first* advent by preaching repentance ; so—according to the happy illustration of the apostolic office which St. Paul gives in the Epistle for this day—the appointed Ministers and Stewards of the mysteries of the Gospel, may likewise prepare for the *second* coming of the same Lord, by warning men to flee from the wrath to come, and in this their accepted time be reconciled to God. Anxious, therefore, to prove themselves faithful in their stewardship, they preach repentance—sincere and deep—with godly sorrow not to be repented of. They preach, in the Saviour's name, Pardon to the *truly* penitent—Hope to the afflicted—New life to the spiritually dead. They publish to every contrite soul the glad tidings that “ Godly “ sorrow worketh repentance to salvation<sup>1</sup> ;” and if men “ return unto the Lord he will abundantly “ pardon<sup>2</sup> :” for “ He heareth the cry of the afflicted<sup>3</sup>,” and thus graciously warns his erring people : “ Turn ye—turn ye from your evil way ; why “ *will ye die*<sup>4</sup> ?” “ Turn yourselves and *live ye*<sup>5</sup>.” The Ministers of the Gospel preach also the necessity of a holy life here—for “ without holiness no man “ shall see the Lord<sup>6</sup> :” and they hold forth the hope of a happy life hereafter ; as a prize of our

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. vii. 10.

<sup>2</sup> Isaiah lv. 7.

<sup>3</sup> Job xxiv. 28.

<sup>4</sup> Ezek. xxxiii. 11.

<sup>5</sup> Ezek. xviii. 32.

<sup>6</sup> Heb. xii. 14.

high calling, sufficiently glorious to animate us to exertion, and keep us faithful even to the end. The spirit of all their warnings, all their exhortations, is comprehended in the merciful declaration of God, recorded by Ezekiel—and selected by our Church as the opening of her daily Service. “When the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and *doeth that which is lawful and right*, he shall save his soul alive<sup>1</sup>.” If the *promise* be *sure*, let us remember that the *conditions* of it are not less *explicit* and *binding*.

Both the *labour*, therefore, of the ministers and stewards of the mysteries of the Gospel, and the *object* of it, are well expressed in the words of the Collect. They strive to “turn the hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just,” in order, that at “the second coming of the Son of Man to judge the world,” the souls committed to their charge “may be found acceptable in his sight, who liveth and reigneth with the Father and the Holy Spirit, ever one God, world without end.”

<sup>1</sup> Ezek. xviii. 27. The latter part of this chapter, from the 20th Verse to the conclusion, presents to us our God in a most striking character—pleading his own cause with Israel—reasoning with them—and shewing, by the plainest argument, that fallen as mankind are, the spiritual and final death of the wicked is not to be charged upon their Creator, but upon themselves. “Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die; and not that he should return from his ways and live?” v. 23. “I have *no* pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God: *wherefore* turn yourselves, and live ye,” v. 32.



## 4. FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT.

*O LORD, raise up, we pray thee, thy power, and come among us, and with great might succour us; that whereas, through our sins and wickedness, we are sore let and hindered in running the race that is set before us, thy bountiful grace and mercy may speedily help and deliver us, through the satisfaction of thy Son our Lord; to whom, with thee and the Holy Ghost, be honour and glory, world without end. Amen.*

THIS Collect follows the last with peculiar strength. As in *that*, supplication was made, that the appointed Ministers of the Gospel might preach effectually, to the saving the souls of mankind; so in *this*, a most necessary confession is made, that we are unable to become holy and good without the especial grace of God.

Nor are we to be surprised at this; since a fulfilment of Christian duties calls for the complete mortification of our natural wills, and the exercise of every spiritual grace. Whoever enters heartily upon his Christian profession, should remember, that *he* enters, as his *Saviour* did, upon *that*, which brings to him no other peace, than peace of *mind*; leaving him equally exposed, with other men, to the various accidents and calamities of life—to numerous dangers both of soul and body—to trials, both temporal and spiritual—to a state of unceasing

watchfulness and anxious care. We are likened, therefore, to men engaged in running a course or race, full of trial and danger. And as a runner takes off and lays aside his long garments, which, if retained, would perplex, and endanger, and cast him down; So, *we* are instructed to throw off, and cast aside, our *sins*; which, if retained, would still more fatally impede us in running our course, and ruin our hope of success: since the prize for which we throughout contend, is of a higher value than all that this world can offer;—"a Crown which is incorruptible."

Finding, however, that strive as we will for the mastery, our *toil* is *great*, our *strength weak* and *uncertain*; we are instructed to cry unto the Lord in our trouble; "Lord, raise up we pray thee, *thy* power, and come among us, and with great might succour us." This prayer implies also a proper confession of our faith. We confess that we should faint in our course, and lose the prize of our high calling, if *He* raise not up his power in our hearts, by the comfort of his holy word and the good influence of his Spirit, and come among us "a present God in time of trouble." We confess that we have a firm trust in his bountiful grace and mercy, for such help and deliverance; and *that*, even speedily: through the satisfaction of his Son our Lord, who died to save us from all sin—to gain for us all needful spiritual help—and to make us at last more than conquerors.

Let us hope, then, that if our prayer be humble and fervent, faithful and sincere, it may be answered by a needful supply of strength and refreshment, to

renew our toil, and to run with patience the race set before us: whilst we look always unto Jesus Christ, our *example*, as well as our *sacrifice*; who has run the same course of trial before us, and who is not only the Author, but the Finisher of our faith. He left nothing undone, which God might require as a *perfect* propitiation. By his spotless life, and *complete* fulfilment of the whole law of God—absolutely and entirely accomplishing *all* that holy will of God, to do which was his object in coming down from heaven—he became fit to be offered as a “full, “perfect, and sufficient oblation and satisfaction for “the sins of the whole world<sup>1</sup>.” To this “*satisfaction* of the Son of God” we appeal in our Collect. In Him let us trust, and then we shall “rejoice in “the Lord *always*<sup>2</sup> ;” over “careful for nothing, but “in every thing, by prayer and supplication, with “thanksgiving, making our requests known unto “God<sup>3</sup> ;” through Him, the same Jesus Christ, who, greater than John the Baptist<sup>4</sup>, hath baptized us with his Spirit, as adopted children of God; and through whom we are promised—if we be faithful and good—“the peace of God; which passeth all “understanding,” and which is the earnest of the happiness of heaven.

<sup>1</sup> See the prayer of consecration in the Communion Service.

<sup>2</sup> See the Epistle for the Day.

<sup>3</sup> Phil. iv. 6 and 7.

<sup>4</sup> See the Gospel for the Day.

## 5. CHRISTMAS-DAY.

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THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, who was born at Bethlehem, a city of Judah; on Monday the 25th of December, in the year of the World 4004.

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*ALMIGHTY God, who hast given us thy only begotten Son, to take our nature upon him, and, as at this time, to be born of a pure Virgin; grant that we, being regenerate, and made thy children by adoption and grace, may daily be renewed by thy Holy Spirit, through the same our Lord Jesus Christ; who liveth and reigneth, with thee and the same Spirit, ever one God, world without end. Amen.*

WE here profess our belief in the *union* of the *divine* and *human* nature in Jesus Christ: that He was, in the world, both God and Man.

As the Son of *God*, he was *equal* with the Father; very God of very God: "I and my Father are *"one*<sup>1</sup>." As the Son of *man*, of the substance of his Mother, he was *inferior* to the Father, to perform whose will "he was made flesh and dwelt among *"us;"* in his *human* character he therefore declared, "my Father is greater than I<sup>2</sup>."

He fulfilled all that the Prophets had written

<sup>1</sup> John x. 30.

<sup>2</sup> John xiv. 28.

concerning him, both in his divine and human character:—as Man, he bore our sorrows, and was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him. And since the Almighty had declared that without shedding of blood, there should be no remission of sins to the fallen race of Adam, it was necessary that the blood of a man should be shed, to redeem his brethren from the curse of sin and death. He, therefore, who undertook to gain remission of sins, took upon him human nature, in order that he might so far be capable of fulfilling all the conditions on which alone that remission could be granted: and as Man, he underwent pain, and misery, and death.

But can any man be worthy to redeem his brother, or make atonement to God for him? We are, by nature, such poor miserable creatures in the sight of God, that we are unable to save even *ourselves* from his anger. How then could we hope to save our *Brethren*? God requires a sacrifice without spot or blemish. Christ, the Son of God, is that pure and spotless sacrifice.—He is the Lamb of God, who alone is able to take away the sins of the world. We see then in Jesus Christ, both the Son of God, and the Son of Man. It is *this* which makes him our Saviour and Redeemer.

Thus we find that Jesus Christ became, as *Man*, capable of enduring every species of suffering,—from that of hungering in the desert, to dying upon the cross. As *God*, he *could not sin*. He was therefore the very Being, whom our offended Father was willing to accept as the appointed sacrifice. Blood was to be shed—the Son of *Man* did die.



The lamb was to be spotless; the sacrifice perfect;—the Son of *God* was himself *Perfection*.

The Epistle appointed for the day is purposely selected to confirm this doctrine, and to guard us against any possible misunderstanding, as to the nature and character of the Messiah. It affirms, that he, who was the *Son of Man*, was also the *great God*—whose Dignity was never lowered—whose Glory was never clouded—whose Majesty was never sullied. Unto the Son he saith, “Thy Throne, O God, is for ever and ever<sup>1</sup>.”

The Gospel also declares, in the most direct terms, the *union*, both of the *divine* and *human* nature of Jesus Christ: “the Word was *God*<sup>2</sup>,” yet the Word was made *Flesh* and dwelt among us—“full of Grace and Truth<sup>3</sup>,” himself the way, and the truth, and the life: opening the kingdom of Heaven to all believers.

With what joy then should we hail this glad season—this day, on which Christ was born in Bethlehem! Let us keep the feast, not with a worldly joyousness, but with a spiritual joy, which shall shew itself in sincerity and truth—in a more zealous observance of the commands of God, in a more ready performance of those duties of love and charity which we owe to our fellow-creatures, and in a more decided attention to the care of our souls, “the one thing needful<sup>4</sup>.” Thus shall we be en

<sup>1</sup> Heb. i. 8.

<sup>2</sup> John i. 1.

<sup>3</sup> John i. 14.

<sup>4</sup> Luke x. 42. When our blessed Lord observes, “But one thing is needful,”—we are not to understand that nothing is to be attended to except religion. He means, that as *that* is most needful to a man, which might best supply his greatest need; so to fallen man,

abled, through divine grace, to fulfil the object of Christ's coming; by promoting "glory to God in the highest; and on earth peace, good will toward men." Our souls will daily be strengthened and refreshed by the word, ministered to them by the grace of God, as our bodies by the bread daily supplied by his providence<sup>1</sup>. We shall find our minds strengthened for the performance of our duty to God; our hearts enlarged for the fulfilment of the duties we owe to our neighbour; and our whole souls devoted to our proper work—even working out our own salvation, though with fear and trembling; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

the religion of the Gospel is most needful; because it supplies what he most needs, viz. God's favour here, and the hope of heaven hereafter. Bread is most needful to the hungry; water to the thirsty; strength to the weak; medicine to the sick; but to man, as a sinner, one only thing is universally needful—namely, that which relieves him from the misery of sin here, and the punishment due to it hereafter; and that one thing is the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This expression, therefore, is to be understood not exclusively, but pre-eminently. My younger readers may find it useful to bear this in mind, when they meet with similar expressions in Scripture. Thus Faith is all in all to the wavering—Humility to the proud—Hope to the desponding: not as removing the necessity for the practice of the other Christian graces, but each as peculiarly appropriate when opposed to that particular sin or error, which it is intended to correct.

<sup>1</sup> In offering the petition in the Lord's Prayer, "Give us this day our daily bread," it is to be remembered, that we pray for spiritual as well as temporal food—for grace to the soul, as well as nourishment to the body. "I," saith Christ "am the bread of life."

## 6. SAINT STEPHEN.

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The first Martyr, stoned to death, A.D. 33 <sup>1</sup>.

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*GRANT, O Lord, that in all our sufferings here upon earth, for the testimony of thy truth, we may stedfastly look up to heaven, and, by faith, behold the glory that shall be revealed; and, being filled with the Holy Ghost, may learn to love and bless our persecutors, by the example of thy first martyr St. Stephen, who prayed for his murderers to thee, O blessed Jesus, who standest at the right hand of God, to succour all those that suffer for Thee, our only Mediator and Advocate. Amen.*

THE sentiment intended to be conveyed to the heart by this Collect, combines the collected force, as it were, of the Epistle and Gospel which accompany it.

The portion of Scripture appointed for the Epistle, though not taken from any of the Epistles, but from the Acts of the Apostles, is to the same purpose; viz. to prepare us for understanding and reaping benefit from the Gospel which is to follow.

<sup>1</sup> St. Stephen was the first of Christ's followers who died for his sake. St. James was the first of the *Apostles* who suffered Martyrdom. See the comment upon the Collect for "St. James the Apostle."

Upon turning to the Scripture before us, we behold in the first Martyr, St. Stephen, a striking example of courage and fortitude, in meeting and bearing the rage of Persecution. Strengthened by the hope of immortality, steeled against bodily pain, and superior to human suffering;—with a countenance upraised to heaven, and beaming with the radiance of a highly wrought mind, he unshrinkingly awaits his doom. His eye stedfastly fixed on the visible glory of God, revealed to him, and catching thence a brighter and more animated beam;—lost to present objects, in the contemplation of the heavens he saw opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God;—he is pictured to us a noble figure of virtuous suffering, and calm courage, which no spirit but from heaven could have inspired. Set to do God's will, already he had conquered the world.—The fears of it were unheeded—the hopes of it despised. He *saw* his peril, and he *dared* it: for “God was with him.”

So will God be with *us* also, if we meet our trials with the same faith: looking to and trusting in Him, who, though invisible, has promised always to draw nigh unto them, who draw nigh unto him<sup>1</sup>; “I am with you alway—even to the end of the “world<sup>2</sup>.”

But heavenly *courage* is not the only grace, which the example of St. Stephen holds out for our imitation. To *courage* in the prospect of approaching martyrdom, succeeded equal *fortitude* in enduring the pains of it.

<sup>1</sup> James iv. 8.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. xxviii. 20.

The Martyr's serenity is drawn in fine contrast with the giddy rage of the maddening multitude. They stopped their ears, and would not hear: they strove to drown his confession of faith, by their own loud voices, and, having resolved to slay him, hurried him out of the city. Strange inconsistency! in the very act of murder, which the law of religion and of nature alike condemn, they yet remembered and observed the legal regulation, that blood was not to be shed *within* the walls of their city. They stoned him. His fortitude rose with the occasion. The more infuriated were his enemies, the more unruffled was his spirit. He not only resolved, in imitation of his blessed Master, to pray for his murderers; but he prepared to offer his petition, with the humility, becoming a creature before the footstool of his Creator. Disregarding the wounds and bruises already inflicted upon him, he first, with dignified self-possession, *kneeled* down; and then, with united solemnity, fervour, and affection, offered up his prayer. "Lord! lay not this sin to their charge:" The prayer returned into his own bosom—he was *blessed* in the deed: for peace of soul overcoming agony of body, the pangs of dissolution seemed almost spared him; so calmly did he sink into the sleep of death.

In the same unconquerable spirit of devotion, have the noble Army of Martyrs, in various ages and under various circumstances, laid down their lives for Christ's sake—to them to live was Christ, but to die was gain. They esteemed all as lost, unless they could win Christ. Their life was hid with Christ in



God<sup>1</sup>. Death could not separate them from the love of God<sup>2</sup>, for they counted all things as nothing, if so they might win Christ<sup>3</sup>. And who can doubt, but that however *no open* vision of the Saviour might be vouchsafed to *them*, as to Stephen, some heavenly voice yet spake peace, though all unheard of men; some spirit brought soothing, though of men unseen. How else, in pain and mortal agony, could the Martyrs' song have been ever the song of triumph?

Thus let *us* strive to act in our *inferior* trials; when called upon to bear unmerited reproach, undeserved calumny, and unlooked-for envy, hatred, malice, or other uncharitableness. In such an hour, let *us*, like St. Stephen, stedfastly look up to heaven for aid, and by faith, behold the glory that shall be revealed; till, being filled by the Holy Ghost, we be enabled to honour God, by a calm resignation and submission to his dispensations, even when they are afflictive: and finally, "learn to love and bless our persecutors."—Even so be it to us, O Lord! even so bring thou to nought "those evils, which the craft or subtilty of the devil or man worketh against us, and, by the providence of thy goodness, disperse them;" that "we thy servants, being hurt by no persecutions, may evermore give thanks unto thee in thy holy Church, through Jesus Christ our Lord<sup>4</sup>."

<sup>1</sup> Col. iii. 3.<sup>2</sup> Rom. viii. 38, 39.<sup>3</sup> Phil. iii. 8.<sup>4</sup> First Collect after the Litany.

## 7. SAINT JOHN THE EVANGELIST.

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Died peaceably at Ephesus, A.D. 100—aged 94.

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*MERCIFUL Lord, we beseech thee to cast thy bright beams of light upon thy Church; that it being enlightened by the doctrine of thy blessed Apostle and Evangelist St. John, may so walk in the light of thy truth, that it may at length attain to the light of everlasting life, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

IN beseeching God to “cast his bright beams of *light* upon the Church,” we express our earnest desire that his *word* and *holy spirit*, which are to the *soul* what the light of the sun is to the *body*, may impart their directing and cheering influence; pointing out the path of righteousness, and encouraging us to continue in the same.

The language is figurative, but very impressive<sup>1</sup>; and agreeable to the mode of speech so often observable in the discourses of our blessed Lord: “any man walk in the *day*, he stumbleth *not*, because he seeth the light of this world; but if a man walk in the *night*, he *stumbleth*, because there is no light in him<sup>2</sup>.” *Without* the word of God

<sup>1</sup> See the Collect for the first Sunday in Advent.

<sup>2</sup> John xi. 9, 10.

for a guide he walks in *danger* ; *with* it, he walks in *safety*.

The persons for whom prayer is made in this collect, are *all* those who compose the Christian Church ; wheresoever dispersed, however circumstanced, and of whatever degree ; high or low—rich or poor—learned or unlearned. *Without* divine light, the most learned cannot be wise unto salvation ; the rich and great cannot enjoy solid peace ; and the poor cannot reap blessing, even from the gospel preached to them : whereas, *with* it, none are so poor but they may share the free and inexhaustible riches of the grace of God : none so rich, but they may prize, more than riches, the inestimable gift of divine grace, and learn so to use treasures upon earth, that they may lay up treasures in heaven : none so wise, but they may see the wisdom of the world to be foolishness with God, whose word is the only fountain of true and living wisdom. Thus enlightened, we become reconciled even to the most painful events in life ; for we see the hand of God in every dispensation towards us, whether as to spiritual or temporal concerns, and are enabled so to strengthen our faith, that, walking in the light of the Gospel, uniformly to the end, we at length attain to the light of *everlasting life*.

But the prayer of this collect is more *especially* applicable to us, in seasons of spiritual sorrow. The most faithful servants of God, are *not* always *equally* sensible of the comforting influence of the light of his countenance ; even *they* sometimes walk in the gloom of spiritual sorrow, and seem, for a season, to find no cheering light from him, who

“lighteth every man that cometh into the world<sup>1</sup>.” They turn in prayer to God, the fountain alike of life and light. “When they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, he bringeth them out of their distresses<sup>2</sup>,” for so hath he promised: “Call upon me in the time of trouble, *I will* deliver thee, and thou *shalt* glorify me<sup>3</sup>.” For, “whoso asketh *faithfully*, receiveth *effectually*<sup>4</sup>,” even an answer of peace to his prayers: “whoso seeketh *diligently*, findeth *surely*.” He is sensible at last, that however the bright beam may sometimes be obscured by the clouds of doubt, of fear, or of heaviness, which the weakness of our mortal nature cannot remove, the light is, in *itself*, not less *glorious*—in its *effects*, not less *beneficial*, though it shine with less conspicuous ray; its influence is granted in proportion to its need. To illustrate the truth of these observations, let us consider how we reason with respect to the appearance of the natural world. When, at noon-day, clouds obscure the sky, no one supposes that the sun is removed, or that its influence is altogether withdrawn, because it happens to be overclouded, and, for a season, invisible to us. The same gracious Being who gives the sun, to revive and fructify the earth, gives clouds, to temper and regulate its effects, and to convince us that he is Lord of all. Nay, the very “clouds drop fatness<sup>5</sup>,” and the storm itself, whose violence terrifies us, often brings healing on its wings, dispels the noxious vapours with which the heated atmosphere is at

<sup>1</sup> John i. 9.<sup>2</sup> Psalm cvii. 28.<sup>3</sup> Psalm l. 15.<sup>4</sup> Matt. vii. 8.<sup>5</sup> Psalm lxx. 12.

such time loaded, and permits our frames to enjoy again that health, and strength, and elasticity, which a tainted air had weakened. In the same manner, he who hath sent his word and Spirit to regenerate us, and renew our spiritual life,—the life of “righteousness and true holiness,” sends also the stormy days of trial and dark nights of affliction, to keep us humble in our high calling as sons of God<sup>1</sup>; and to draw us in prayer to *him*, when a passing cloud brings disquiet, and our souls seek rest, but find none. Indeed, the storms and ills of life, even whilst they *alarm the mind, purify the heart*, and give to the soul renovated health and strength, to pursue the great work of its salvation.

We are further directed in this Collect to pray, that divine light may be poured upon us more particularly by the *doctrine* of the Apostle and Evangelist *St. John*. This direction is given for a very good reason. Of all men, St. John claims our especial regard as a teacher, for he teaches by precepts, founded upon his own experience. He lived to be very old, and suffered much from the changes and chances of a period more than usually trying to the followers of Jesus Christ; but throughout his long and eventful life, he never failed to experience comfort and joy, from a sense of the divine protection and favour; always cheered, like David in old time, by the light of God’s countenance. Even when he was sent into banishment<sup>2</sup>, his soul experienced *no*

<sup>1</sup> 1 John iii. 1, 2.

<sup>2</sup> The place of his banishment was Patmos, a small rocky island in the Grecian Archipelago, which is a part of the Mediterranean Sea.



disquiet, *no* despondency. He drew nigh unto God, who is equally present in all places, a sure help in trouble. During the whole period of his banishment, he enjoyed peculiar marks of favour from heaven, and was *then* most supported by the comforts of religion, when *other* comforts most failed him. So the word of truth bids *us* expect, that “as thy *days*, “so shall thy *strength* be<sup>1</sup>.” His solitude was cheerful, for he could commune with his God. He had not set up the staff of his rest upon earth, but looked onward to a better country. To the cares and pleasures of this world he was dead; his thoughts were directed towards heavenly objects. It was during his banishment that he wrote the Book of the Revelation, in which he records what the Almighty was pleased to make known to him, respecting the future state of the Church of Christ, even till time shall be no longer.

See then the Evangelist St. John, an outcast from society, and banished to a lonely island, but happy—for God was with him—and heaven was the country to which he was journeying! See him deprived of all those social ties, and sweet charities of life, which assist us in bearing the weight of our afflictions, and give increased enjoyment to us in the days of prosperity! But these very deprivations proved, ultimately, his *happiness*, and even his *gain*: he found the *favour* of God, in whose presence, by *faith* on earth, as well as by *fruition* in heaven, there is fulness of joy<sup>2</sup>. He united himself to his

<sup>1</sup> Deut. xxxiii. 25.

<sup>2</sup> Psalm xvi. 11.

Saviour<sup>1</sup>, and so gained a friend, by whom all the worldly advantages he might have resigned were far more than compensated to him, in whom were centred whatever blessings could possibly have attended the enjoyment of the dearest relations of social life; for not only “he that *loseth* his life for *my* sake,” saith the Saviour, “shall find it<sup>2</sup>,” but “whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother<sup>3</sup>.” “And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name’s sake, shall receive an hundred fold, and shall inherit everlasting life<sup>4</sup>.”

Thus St. John is a teacher, not only by the *light* of his *writings*<sup>5</sup>, but by his brighter *example*, which

<sup>1</sup> John xiv. 23. “If a man love me he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.”

<sup>2</sup> Matt. x. 39.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. xii. 50.

<sup>4</sup> Matt. xix. 29. and Mark x. 29, 30. How instructive! how full of practical consolation! Art thou by any unforeseen circumstances left adrift as it were, “upon the waves of this troublesome world?” Has ill success attended your honest industry, and narrowed your means of comfort? Has sickness disabled you from exertion? Have false friends forsaken you? Do the faithful lie, tenanting the grave? Has your fidelity to God removed you from the love of kindred? Has your fair promise of domestic happiness been clouded? Or has death, unsparingly, left you without father, without mother, without brother, without sister?—Under all or any of such trials, a voice from heaven calls you to God, who will be to you all these blessings in one.

<sup>5</sup> St. John, the Evangelist, wrote the Gospel which is called after his name. He wrote also three Epistles, and the book entitled the “Book of the Revelation.” Of the Epistles, the first is addressed

will indeed live till his Lord come again in the full light of heaven, to lead his redeemed to their glory.

Let us pray then, that we may, at last, be of that happy number; and that when the last trumpet shall summon assembled worlds to judgment, *we* may rise from the dark night of the grave, to the glorious light of everlasting day, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

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## 8. THE INNOCENTS' DAY.

*O ALMIGHTY God, who, out of the mouths of babes and sucklings, hast ordained strength, and madest Infants to glorify thee by their deaths; Mortify and kill all vices in us: and so strengthen us by thy grace, that by the innocency of our lives, and constancy of our faith, even unto death, we may glorify thy holy name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

As St. Stephen, by a *voluntary* martyrdom, glorified God, both in *will* and *deed*, so the murdered *Innocents*, whose death was *not* voluntary, were made to glorify him in *deed*, though *not* in *will*.

*Their* death is commemorated, in order that the circumstances with which it is connected may be

to Christians in general, and therefore called *Catholic*, or *Universal*. The second and third are addressed to individuals.

This St. John, who was the beloved disciple of our Lord, is called the *Evangelist*, to distinguish him from St. John the *Baptist*, who was the forerunner of our Lord.—See the Collects for the third Sunday in Advent, and for St. John Baptist.

the more deeply impressed upon the mind, strengthening our faith, and animating us to an emulous striving to promote the glory of God in our several stations.

The destruction of these Innocents is an instance of the most ferocious barbarity on record. HEROD, king of Judea, surnamed the GREAT—great in crime as in power—heard it noised abroad that “the Child Jesus,” the expected King of the Jews, was born in Bethlehem of Judea, a place within his own jurisdiction. He was instantly filled with *indignation* and *envy*. He was *indignant* that the regal title should be assigned to any person but himself; and he was *envious* at the readiness which all people evinced to greet the expected Messiah. Hurried on to madness by these combined feelings, and ignorant that the *spiritual* kingdom about to be established by the Messiah could not interfere with *him*, whose kingdom was of this world, he “sent forth and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under<sup>1</sup>.” The whole circumstance is unparalleled in history: no succeeding age could have found any one so mad as to issue such an edict, or so hardened in cruelty as to execute it. It is indeed scarcely within our conception of possibility, that a policy so barbarous could have entered into the heart of man: so much have our moral and social feelings been meliorated by the mild influence of that religion, to fill up the evidence and testimonies of which these Innocents did suffer.

<sup>1</sup> Matt. ii. 16.

We may imagine, perhaps, with what horror the families of Judah would hear the cruel proclamation; but imagination itself cannot picture the miseries which must have marked the *scene* where these Innocents lay bleeding and dying in the presence, and some even in the arms, of their distracted parents! Murdered, too, by the unsparing hand of Beings, who were themselves, probably, husbands and fathers! But *no touch of pity* was there.

It is proper to remark here, how signally HEROD defeated his own purpose, and by his attempts to destroy Jesus, brought about, however unintentionally on *his* part, the very ends which God had in view for the more firmly establishing the Messiah's kingdom. Herod intended that, in the general slaughter, CHRIST should be cut off. But the parents of Jesus, forewarned by Divine Providence, took him into the land of Egypt, the very place whence, according to prophecy, the Messiah was to be called: "Out of Egypt have I called my Son<sup>1</sup>." Thus the Infant, on whose account the wicked king of the Jews had incurred this load of guilt, not only escaped the sword, and was conducted by his parents into a place of safety; but escaped it by so manifest an interposition of Divine Providence, and the place of safety chosen was in such evident accord with the prophecies respecting the Messiah's advent, that the history remains for ever a record, equally satisfactory and instructive, of the power of God overruling the fraud and malice which the devil or man can work

<sup>1</sup> Matt. ii. 15.



against the Church, and bringing to nought the counsels of the Evil One.

Nor let us think it strange, that a merciful Providence should permit the destruction of so many unoffending *Innocents*. On *this*, as on many *other* events recorded in Holy Writ, it would ill become man to be inquisitive as to the mysterious counsel of the MOST HIGH. HIS *ways* are *equal*, though they be past *finding out*; and his *judgments merciful*, though *unsearchable*. Still it may be permitted us to observe, that Almighty God, who is pleased to *lend* us life, has a right to *demand* it again at *what time* and in *what manner* he pleases. Whether, therefore, he requires a surrender of life in *infancy*, or permit existence to be lengthened even to *old age*, our *chief* care should be to live *every hour* in due preparation for a summons from *this* world to the *next*; and to exercise ourselves *always* in dutiful submission to *Him*, “in whose hands are the issues “ of life and death.”

With respect to the *sufferers* themselves, if *sufferers* they can be called, who were removed in their *innocence*, *their's* was a *happy* change, a change from a world of *trouble* to a world of *peace*. In reference to beings of their age, our blessed Lord declares, that “of such is the kingdom of God<sup>1</sup>:” accepted by their Heavenly Father for Jesus Christ's sake, they were admitted to an inheritance far surpassing the most glorious earthly kingdom, even an *heavenly* inheritance: “For in heaven their angels

<sup>1</sup> Mark x. 14.

“do always behold the face of the Father which is in heaven <sup>1</sup>.”

Just reflections upon this subject are particularly comforting to those parents, from whom God may have been pleased to remove a child in its infancy. It is natural that, under such circumstances, mortal men, who are at best short-sighted, “and slow of heart to believe <sup>2</sup>,” should weep and lament. The mourning parents have lost a child, whose smiles were their comfort, and to minister to whose wants was at once their duty and their joy; and God forbid that the mourners should be denied the melancholy indulgence of tears. “Jesus wept <sup>3</sup>” when he saw

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xviii. 10.

<sup>2</sup> Luke xxiv. 25.

<sup>3</sup> John xi. 35. It has been sometimes considered, that the cause of this expression of sorrow was our Saviour's grief at foreseeing how many of those, to quicken whose faith he was about to work a miracle, evidencing him as God, would yet continue in the hardness of unbelief. But a knowledge of the prevalence of unbelief was a cause of grief in *continual* operation, and, throughout the whole life of our blessed Lord, must have been as a token and a sign, stamping him a man of sorrow.

The peculiar and strong expression of grief recorded to have been evinced by the Son of God upon the occasion of the death of Lazarus, must therefore have had its origin from a different source. It sprang from a perfect sympathy with the feelings of humanity. It was one among other proofs, that the Saviour of the world, though the Son of God, was also the Son of Man, “touched with the feelings of our infirmities.” It was doubtless accompanied also by some fuller declaration of affection and other demonstration, both of regret at the loss of his friend, and of heartfelt sympathy with the surviving mourners. These particulars indeed are not specified in the brief account of this occurrence given by the Evangelist, but they are plainly to be inferred from the striking exclamation of the Jews, “See! how he loved him!”

The younger reader may here be reminded that the acts of our Saviour's benevolence, either in the usual course of Providence, or

his friends in trouble. But let us not sorrow like men without hope for them that sleep in Jesus; let us rather console ourselves by reflecting, that the spirit of the innocent, instead of living to encounter those various cares and vexations, which we all find to be *our trials* and *crosses*, hath passed to the God who created it, and is admitted an angel into heaven. Greater blessing than this not even the most loving mother could wish for her only child, the sole comfort of her existence.

Children may hence learn that even *they*, young as they are, may glorify the great God, their heavenly Father, by a virtuous life, by honouring their father and mother, and by being obedient in all things.

Indeed it is the duty of us *all* to remember, that we must receive the Gospel as little children<sup>1</sup>, without doubt or hesitation, with perfect simplicity, and unreserved obedience; even as we *justly* expect our children to receive the precepts we lay down for their direction. *Entire* submission therefore to the will of God is expected of us *all*, with an uniform reliance upon the aid of his Holy Spirit; for *he* alone, (in the words of the collect,) “ can “ mortify and kill all vices in us, and so strengthen

in the more awful demonstration of miraculous power, were so numerous, that as St. John observes, “ If they should be written every “ one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the “ books that should be written,” John xxi. 25. Hence we may justly infer, that in the record of those actions and events, which *are* written, every minute part is not described, nor every word written, but only the leading points of the action, and the more conspicuous expressions in which our Lord either declared his power and office, or vouchsafed his instructions and his promises.

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xviii. 3, 4.

“ us by his grace, that, by the innocency of our lives,  
“ and the constancy of our faith, even unto death,  
“ we may glorify his holy name, through Jesus  
“ Christ our Lord.”

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## 9. SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS-DAY.

*ALMIGHTY God, who hast given us thine only-begotten Son, to take our nature upon him, and, as at this time, to be born of a pure Virgin ; grant that we, being regenerate, and made thy children by adoption and grace, may daily be renewed by thy Holy Spirit, through the same our Lord Jesus Christ, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the same Spirit, ever one God, world without end. Amen.*

THE Collect used for Christmas-Day, is retained for the service of the Sunday following, in order to impress more deeply upon our minds, the solemnity with which we should gladly continue to meditate upon so glorious an event, as the Nativity of the Son of God.

The *first* part of the Collect contains the doctrine of the *union* in *Jesus Christ* of both the *divine* and *human* nature, and has been already explained<sup>1</sup>. In the *second* part, supplication is made to God, that the benefit of our Saviour's Advent may be continued to us : that we, “ being *regenerate*, and made

<sup>1</sup> See the Collect for Christmas-Day.

“*his children by adoption and grace, may daily be renewed by his Holy Spirit.*”—The prayer is most carefully worded, in order that no misunderstanding may arise, respecting the doctrine upon which it is framed.

The supplicant speaks of himself, as *regenerate*: at the same time he asks to be *daily renewed* by the Holy Spirit.

He was *regenerate* at *baptism*; for he was *then* born anew of water and the Holy Ghost, sanctified as a child of God, and inheritor of the kingdom of heaven, according to the holy ordinance of Jesus Christ himself<sup>1</sup>. Yet he admits, that even this his regeneration cannot ensure him his heavenly inheritance, unless sanctification, *then first* vouchsafed, be daily renewed in him by the Holy Spirit. The term “regeneration” is here used in its strict and proper sense—of a “new birth,” and *that, spiritually*; a new birth unto *righteousness*, “for being by *nature* born in *sin*, and the children of *wrath*, we are *hereby* made the children of *grace*,” that is, we are admitted members of a *new family*, of which Jesus Christ is the head<sup>2</sup>; and are adopted as children of God, freely by grace.

The effect then of baptism upon us, as spiritual beings, is, that *old things are passed away, all things are become new*, “for if any man be in Christ he is “a *new creature*”<sup>3</sup>. The apostle Paul thus expressed

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xxviii. 19.

<sup>2</sup> See the Church Catechism, where we express our belief that at baptism we are made members of Christ (the *head* of the Church), children of God, &c.

<sup>3</sup> 2 Cor. v. 17.



himself, to point out to us, that when we are baptized into Jesus Christ, we share, what are *new* to us, the *privileges* of the family into which we have newly entered : for we are *privileged* to look up to God, as to a heavenly Father, who will hear our prayers, and take us under his protection<sup>1</sup>. With new *privileges* are connected new *obligations* : being members of the *family* of God, we are bound to live agreeably to the *laws* of God.

Thus the Christian lives in such *newness* of life, that no term is strong enough to express the change, but that made use of—*regeneration*. Nor is it any marvel, that when our blessed Saviour contrasted the Gentile in his state of darkness, the Jew in his self-righteousness, and the natural man in his sins, with an humble follower of the light of the Gospel—he should speak of the latter, as one “born again”—“marvel not that I say unto thee ye *must* be *born* “*again*.”

But the Almighty, whenever he has been pleased to reveal a *new* dispensation to his people, or to *renew* his covenant with them, has usually ordained that some *outward* or *visible* sign be observed, in *token* of an *inward* and *spiritual* benefit conferred.

Thus when he called Abraham, he instituted *circumcision*<sup>2</sup>, to be observed by him and his posterity, as an *outward* sign of their being then admitted to *new* privileges, and bound to the performance of *new* duties. He also, on the same occasion, changed the name of the Patriarch and his wife ;—*Abram* was to

<sup>1</sup> “Whereby we cry Abba, Father.”

<sup>2</sup> See the Collect for Circumcision.

take the name of *Abraham*, and *Sarai*, that of *Sarah*. All which was done, that there might be some manifest and *outward* token of a *spiritual* change of condition. The sons of men became the sons of God—born again—regenerate.

So when we enter into covenant with God, by Jesus Christ—called to *new duties*, and admitted to *new privileges*—we are baptized with *water*, as an *outward* sign of our renewed spiritual state. We also take a *new name*; and, as children adopted into the family of God, are named *Christians*, after Him—JESUS CHRIST—who is the head of *all*. Thus *changed*, both in *condition* and in *name*, we are, *scripturally* speaking, born again—*regenerate*,—*changed* from a state of *wrath*, to a state of *grace*.

But *spiritual* life, as well as *natural* life, requires to be *continually supported*, or our new *birth* will *not* profit us.

To this end, it is necessary, that the grace *first* given at Baptism, as the quickening principle of spiritual life, should be continually *renewed* in us; because, since day by day we offend against the perfect law of God <sup>1</sup>, we of course *forfeit* the *privileges* of the covenant, by *breaking* the *conditions* of it; and can recover them only by that grace, to assure us of which, our baptism was the pledge.

As often as this renewal is effected by the Holy Spirit, in answer to our prayers <sup>2</sup>, so often are we enabled to lead a *new* life. We feel *new dispositions* towards our fellow-creatures—we love even our enemies <sup>3</sup>. We exercise *new powers*—we have power

<sup>1</sup> "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in *one* point, he is guilty of *all*." James ii. 10.

<sup>2</sup> "Ask, and ye shall have."

<sup>3</sup> Luke vi. 27.

to resist evil. We have *new views* both of *God* and of *ourselves*. We know *God*—merciful to save—but just to punish; we know *ourselves* deserving of wrath and condemnation, but made capable of being saved by faith in Jesus Christ. New *fears*, new *hopes*, actuate us; we now fear *God*, when before-time we feared *the world*; and our hope of *peace* is fixed, not upon the attainment of such advantages as this world can present to us, but upon the glorious prospect held out to us of attaining life everlasting.

With respect to those, who—Christians by *name only*—are “lovers of pleasure more than lovers of “*God* <sup>1</sup>,” it must be cause of great concern to every reflecting mind, to see them living as if their new *birth* required the performance of *no* new *duties* in proof of new *life*. Because, though *baptism* be to the *Christian*, now, what *circumcision* <sup>2</sup> was to the *Jew*, in old time, viz. *regeneration* <sup>3</sup>, it cannot, of *itself*, stand in the stead of a new and holy *life* <sup>4</sup>, to which it is but the entrance. In order to avail for our salvation, it must be—not of the *letter* only, but of the *heart*, and in the *spirit*; whose praise is not of *men* but of *God*: for it is not only a *sign* of being admitted to the privileges of the Christian covenant, but a *means* of conveying all the benefits of them.

Nor need we doubt as to the *cause* of that *inactivity* in a *spiritual* course, which too often marks the Christian.

<sup>1</sup> 2 Tim. iii. 4.

<sup>2</sup> See the Collect for the Circumcision.

<sup>3</sup> Admission, by grace, into the family of God.

<sup>4</sup> “Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord.”

It is *caused* by his neglect of the *means appointed* for supporting the *life*, given at his *new birth*. Those *means* are, the *word* and *Spirit* of God. The Holy Scriptures, by which that Spirit continually speaks to our hearts and consciences, are the essential *food* for sustaining—day by day—*spiritual life*. It cannot be any wonder, therefore, that the soul, which rejects its proper *food*, should lose its proper *strength*, and *spiritually die*.

Whereas, if knowing ourselves *regenerate*, and so privileged to address God as our Father, we be instant in prayer for the *Spirit*, and search diligently for guidance in the written word of truth—we may be assured, that our spiritual strength will be daily renewed. God will enable us to subdue in our heart pride, envy, malice, and all uncharitableness—to deny ourselves—and, without murmur or repining, to bear our daily cross.

In short, as children of God, we shall have grace to obey his laws.—We shall live to *Him* who hath “saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit”—and, by *Him* be conducted safely, through the difficulties of a *spiritual life here*, to the *Rest*, which awaiteth the faithful, in life *eternal, hereafter*.

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## 10. CIRCUMCISION OF CHRIST.

*ALMIGHTY God, who madest thy blessed Son to be circumcised, and obedient to the law for man; grant us the true circumcision of the Spirit: that*

*our hearts and all our members being mortified from all worldly and carnal lusts, we may in all things obey thy blessed will, through the same thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

AT whatever period of life, or on whatever occasion, we view our blessed Saviour, there is *one* feature in his character which is strikingly conspicuous—obedience to the whole law and will of God<sup>1</sup>. Though as *man, sinless*; and as *God, omnipotent*; he was nevertheless made obedient to the law, from the earliest to the latest period of his life: complying with *every* religious ordinance, that by fulfilling the law, He might fulfil *all righteousness*.

Accordingly, in his earliest days, we find him undergoing *circumcision*.—"When eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child, his name was called JESUS<sup>2</sup>;" which occasion, as the *beginning* of his holy fulfilment of the law, our Church sees fit to commemorate; and to proper meditations upon which, the prayer of this Collect is well fitted to lead us.

Circumcision itself was instituted by God, when he called Abraham from a strange country, and appointed him the head of his Church—the father of the faithful. It was *intended* as a sign that a cove-

<sup>1</sup> "I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me." Thus accomplishing, to the very letter, David's prophetic declaration. "Lo! I come; in the volume of the book it is written of me, that I should fulfil *thy* will, O my God! I am content to do it. Yea! *thy* law is within my heart!" Ps. xl. 10. Prayer-Book Version.

<sup>2</sup> Luke ii. 21.



*nant* had been *entered* into, between God and his chosen; and it was commanded to be *continued*, in order that his people, *reminded* by the *outward sign*, might be continually impressed with a due sense of the *inward grace*, thereby *signified* and *conveyed*.

The only interruption to the continuance of this rite, till its abolition by our Saviour, was during the Forty Years sojourn in the Wilderness. Its general discontinuance *then*, was doubtless by divine command, as were also the *few* instances of its *observance* during that period.

Besides which, both the *civil* and *religious* condition of the chosen, was *then* so *peculiar*, so evidently appointed and continued by the miraculous interposition of Heaven, that it is nothing extraordinary, if there was a partial *suspension* of what, in former ages, had distinguished them. Indeed, their *peculiar existence* was a living proof of their being *the peculiar people*: the miraculous manner in which they were *kept distinct* from all other people, and enabled to flourish as a great and powerful nation, without the usual labour of husbandry and commerce—miraculously *clothed*—miraculously *fed*;—these circumstances combined, exhibited a sufficient *outward sign*, that they were the peculiar people of God, under his especial grace and favour. At length, when Joshua had conducted them over Jordan, into the promised land, the holy rite was renewed at Gilgal<sup>1</sup>: as was the Passover<sup>2</sup>, which also had been disused during their sojourn in the Wilderness.

<sup>1</sup> Josh. v. 2—9.

<sup>2</sup> Josh. v. 10.

That our blessed Saviour, who was spotless, and needed no remedy for ills to which he *could not* be liable, should so perfectly obey his Father's will, as to undergo this *outward act*—*painful in itself*, and *significant of inward guilt*—must convince every reflecting mind, how absolutely necessary it is for *us*, who are even *born in sin*,—that we be, in our infancy, brought to the Sacrament of *baptism*, and early made to observe that ordinance: for *that* is to *us*, what *circumcision* was to the *Jews*,—significant of *inward* devotion to God's service on *our* part, and of covenanted mercy and grace on *His*.

The Collect marks this truth very forcibly. It observes that our blessed Saviour was thus obedient *for man*: viz. for the *sake* of man—for *our benefit*: that, by thus fulfilling every tittle of the law, he might *complete* our redemption, and also might be, even in this *first* period of his infancy, an ensample for our good. Our Church therefore provides, that the children of her people *now*, should be presented for purification at *baptism*: for the *ceremonial* law ceased to be in force, as soon as Jesus Christ had *perfectly* fulfilled the *conditions* of it. *His* commandment was “Go ye forth, and teach *all* nations; *baptizing* them, in the name of the Father, and of “the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.”

In allusion, however, to the mode adopted under the *Mosaic law*, of entering into covenant with the Almighty, the Collect instructs us to pray, that God would “grant us the true *circumcision* of the *Spirit*.” The *object* of which prayer is, that God would remove from our hearts those *evil* thoughts, and *sinful* inclinations, which are its natural growth, and im-

plant therein, and bring to maturity, *holy* thoughts and *good* resolutions ; since *these* are the fruits of a soul, which, being made *regenerate*, is *daily renewed* by the spirit of grace<sup>1</sup> : for as “ out of the heart (*naturally*) proceed *evil* thoughts<sup>2</sup>,” so “ the fruit of “ the Spirit is in all *goodness*, and *righteousness*, and “ *truth*<sup>3</sup>.” The prayer is founded upon the arguments made use of by St. Paul, in the Epistle for the day<sup>4</sup>, where he declares, that “ though Abraham received the *sign* of circumcision, *because* it was appointed of *God*, the *mere act* did not benefit him — “ it was a *seal* of the righteousness of *faith*.”

As adopted children, therefore, of HIM, who “ made his blessed Son to be *circumcised*, and obedient to the *law*” of Moses, “ *for man* ;” we are obedient to the *law* of the *Gospel*, and are *baptized* thereunto : *baptism* being to *us*, the seal of the righteousness of faith. But we should not rest satisfied with having performed the *outward act* of baptism ; we should continually strive to *live* in all *holiness*, and be also instant in prayer to God, that he would bring our exertions to good effect : that “ our hearts, “ and all our members, being mortified from all carnal “ and worldly lusts, we may in all things obey his “ blessed will,” and be *daily renewed* in the grace of a *new* life.

In short, it is expected that we *obey*, both in the *letter*, and in the *spirit*. So did our *Redeemer* act, though he was a man *without sin* : how much rather then should *we* so act, who are confessedly “ miser-

<sup>1</sup> As explained in the preceding Collect.

<sup>2</sup> Mark vii. 21.

<sup>3</sup> Ephes. v. 9.

<sup>4</sup> See the Epistle for the day.

“able sinners<sup>1</sup>?” If we are *bound* to observe the *form* of baptism, still *stronger* is our obligation to observe the *conditions* of it; because, *so only* can we secure for ourselves the benefits, to which that form admits us:—“*this* ought we to *do*, and *not* to leave “the *other undone* <sup>2</sup>.” Obedience is the only *proof* of love and duty towards God: it is therefore our *only safety*. *Vain* will be our *faith*, and *presumptuous* our *hopes*, if they be not attended by a holy and *un-reserved obedience*. We are urged to this obedience, by every endearing *motive* which might influence us as creatures and children of God—*saved* by his *mercy*—*dependent* upon his *care*: “*Obey* my voice, and *I* “will be *your God*, and *ye* shall be *my people* <sup>3</sup>.”



## 11. THE EPIPHANY.

*O GOD, who, by the leading of a star, didst manifest thy only-begotten Son to the Gentiles; mercifully grant, that we, which know thee now by faith, may, after this life, have the fruition of thy glorious Godhead, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

THE meaning of the word *Epiphany*, is *manifestation*. Under that term we commemorate the season in which Jesus Christ was *manifested* or *made known* to the *Gentile* world. It had pleased God, before the advent of the Saviour, to confine the reve-

<sup>1</sup> See the Litany.

<sup>2</sup> Luke xi. 42.

<sup>3</sup> Jerem. vii. 23.

lation of his will, and its attendant spiritual privileges, to his *chosen* Israel: but upon the coming of his Son, he called the *Gentiles* also, both to a knowledge of his revealed will, and to a participation of the privileges which accompanied that knowledge. To *this* event, therefore, our Church very properly appropriates a *particular* service.

The circumstances attending the Epiphany are stamped with that characteristic regard to the *peculiar habits* of those affected by it, which so eminently distinguish all God's dealings with mankind.

The coming of the long-expected Messiah was first announced to the *Jews*, by a message from heaven itself, to simple and unlearned shepherds—a mode this which was direct and intelligible to them. Angels brought the tidings of great joy, and declared that a Saviour, Christ the Lord, was born into the world. To the *Gentiles*, his Advent was signified by a different mode, but one which was adapted to the habits and disposition of *those*, to whom the sign was sent: “There came Magi, “ or wise men, from the East, to Jerusalem, saying, “ ‘ where is *he* that is born King of the Jews, for “ we have seen his *star* in the East, and are come “ to worship him?’ ”

These Magi, who had journeyed from the distant country of Arabia, were much devoted to the study of the heavenly bodies, and were continually watching their motions. Now, as in the course of their studies, aided by the experience of men of old time, and by their own diligent observation, they must have found the most perfect order and regularity to



prevail in that glorious assemblage of the works of God, which the starry firmament presents. We may readily imagine that a very powerful curiosity was excited, when they observed this *new* star; a star which was doubtless of *peculiar* form, and so *bright*, that even the noon-day sun eclipsed not its brightness. By day and by night it shone: not transitory; but fixed, radiant, and lambent, over the distant region of Judea: aptly pointing out HIM, who was to be a “light to lighten the Gentiles.”

This star, which hung *low* over the horizon, like a beacon-light to guide them, the Magi were divinely directed to follow. They were led by it to Jerusalem, but *there* the miraculous light was lost to them. Learning, however, after diligent enquiry, that the expected Messiah was to be born at Bethlehem, they continued their journey thither;—again they saw their guiding star—and found at last the SAVIOUR. Thus the lowly shepherds of Judea, and the illustrious Magi of Arabia, met together with one heart, and one soul, to worship the long expected Messiah; and there was no longer difference between Jew and Gentile in his sight, “who “is no respecter of persons.” Here it may be observed, that the *Arabians* were *particularly* chosen from the Gentiles on this occasion, because *they*, as well as the *Jews*, claimed kindred with Abraham; for as the Jews were descended from *Isaac*, the son of the patriarch by *promise*, the Arabians were of the lineage of *Ishmael*, his *outcast* son; whose posterity, however, were by covenant again to be received, that all might be collected into one, as children of one common Father.

The shepherds had no other offering to present than their *devoted hearts*, with adoration and joy. The wise men brought—*gold*, as an offering suitable to the *King* of heaven—*frankincense*, as *incense* acceptable before the throne of God—and *myrrh*, as significant that as *man* he should *die*, as an appropriate offering of a mortified nature—an offering of a heart *dead* to *this* world, but *alive* to the hopes of the *next*, through *Him* whose death it signified. The splendid offerings of the Gentiles, and the lowly offerings of the Jews, were *equally* accepted, through *His* worth, *to* whom and *by* whom they were offered, with *one* accord and with *one* spirit.

We are shewn by this history that the call of the Gospel is *universal*. In the manifestation of the Saviour to the *unlearned* shepherds of Judea, and to the *learned* Magi of the East—the wise and great of Arabia—the Almighty had united *all* nations, and *all* degrees of men, in *one* holy faith, and in *one* blessed hope. Jews and Gentiles, learned and unlearned, rich and poor, noble and ignoble—these are *all* called to salvation; that, in the promised Saviour of the world, *every* nation of the earth, *every* family, and *every* person, might be blessed. For in the persons of these Magi, *all* the nations of the Gentiles may be considered to have laid low their proud distinctions of human acquirement, and devoted all to *him*, from whom come riches, and wisdom, and honour: whose kingdom, not of this world, is greater than all worlds—for it is from everlasting to everlasting.

As the *wise men*, by their *star*, so *we*, by *faith*, are led to the knowledge of God; and the beautiful

prayer which our Church thereon frames, is, “ that God would grant us, after this life, to have the fruition of his glorious Godhead.” To shew ourselves *sincere* in offering up this petition, let us imitate the example of the first worshippers ; for though we bring no gold, or frankincense, or myrrh, we can bring honour to our heavenly King, devotion to our God, and a heart dead unto sin, but alive unto righteousness, and animated by the hope that we may have the fruition of the glorious Godhead in the kingdom of Christ.

It is impossible to dwell upon this subject with wonder *only* ; the more we contemplate the Epiphany of our Lord, *wonderful* as it is, the more deeply shall we lay it to heart, as a subject which calls forth united feelings of *humility* and *joy*. The manifestation of a Saviour to the *Gentiles*, was a manifestation of him to our (*now*) enlightened country.—*We* were not *then* the Chosen.

At the moment in which the star of Judah rose over Bethlehem, as a harbinger of the sun of righteousness, *our* land was sunk in the night of heathenism—clouds and darkness rested upon it. The worship of the islanders of Britain was idolatrous, and marked with all the cruelty which was the natural attendant upon the idolatry of the heathen world. The gloomy terror of the sacred groves was but significant of the more terrific acts of superstition by which they were polluted—*human victims* were offered in sacrifice !

But the darkness is gone : a brighter day than even Judah saw, *now* enlightens *us*. Every temple is now raised to the honour of the *true God* ; and

the worshippers confess *no other* Lord. Do we *re-joice* at being *freed* from the spiritual *darkness* by which our land was in *former* ages obscured? Are we grateful for the light which *now* shines upon us in its *full* lustre? Do we prize that light as the inestimable gift of God, by his Son Jesus Christ? Do we glory in it as a brighter light than shone for the Arabian Magi?—Let us emulate their zeal; let us yield ourselves to the guidance of the light that now shineth for *us*; and, taking *faith* for *our* star, follow as its guides, till it lead us to the Son of God, and through him conduct us to the fruition of the glorious Godhead; where we shall find in our Messiah, not the lowly Jesus, entering upon a world of trouble, but Christ the Lord, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace; the Head, and Ruler over all!



## 12. FIRST SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

*O LORD, we beseech thee mercifully to receive the prayers of thy people which call upon thee, and grant that they may both perceive and know what things they ought to do, and also may have grace and power faithfully to fulfil the same, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

CHIEF among the benefits which result to us from the manifestation of Jesus Christ, must be reckoned the privilege of drawing near unto God in prayer, with a well-grounded hope that he will be

pleased to answer us : “ Whatsoever ye shall ask the “ Father in *my name*, he will give it you<sup>1</sup>.”

Rightly to value this privilege, we should consider the *nature* of prayer. It is the conversing with God ;—the appointed mode of communication between creatures and their Creator, whereby corporeal beings express their wants to a spiritual and invisible Being, upon whom they confess their dependence for all things “ necessary, as well for the “ body as the soul.” Thus prayer, when “ we cast “ all our cares upon God,” knowing that God careth for us, is strength to the weak, comfort to the afflicted, guidance to the doubting, life to the dead. In the severity of our trials, the strength of God himself<sup>2</sup> will be perfected in our weakness. In afflictions we are not *encouraged* only, but *commanded* to draw near unto him<sup>3</sup>. Are we in doubt as to our path of duty ? Prayer takes us to *him*, whose rod, and whose staff, will both *point* out the right way, and *support* us in it. If we be instant in prayer, we are no longer like *dead* men, insensible

<sup>1</sup> John xvi. 23. Thus the humble are encouraged, and the presumptuous checked. If, misapplying this full and gracious assurance, any offer up the prayer of ambition, or worldliness, and find their prayer unanswered, let them not therefore suppose that God heareth not, or that the word of Christ faileth. Such petition cannot, of course, be offered in *Christ's* name. Neither his kingdom nor his promises are of this world.

But if the good and humble mind, wearied with the unsatisfactory routine of worldliness, is athirst for the living God, and like the hart, panting for the water-brooks, earnestly *desireth* the refreshing influences of the *word* and *Spirit*, and in that earnest desire asketh to be made rich in every good word and work ; he that *so* asketh, *will receive* fully ; ask whatsoever measure he will.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Cor. xii. 9.

<sup>3</sup> James iv. 8.



of the duties, the cares, the fears, and the hopes of our spiritual life. We feel the *importance* of our duties, the *weight* of our cares, the awful *reality* of our fears ; but we are enabled to *fulfil* our duties, to *bear up* under our cares, and to rise *victorious* to our fears, by the hope set before us, of having, in answer to our prayers, the Holy Spirit for our comfort here, and for our guide to everlasting happiness hereafter, through the manifested Son of God.

But the duty and privilege of prayer, is *not* confined to *past* or *present* occasions. Its efficacy extends to the *future*.

Indeed, it is in this view of it, that the Christian is so continually exhorted by our Lord and his Apostles, to a life of prayer—to be *instant* in the duty—to watch and pray *always*. For such is our constitution, as rational beings, that we have the faculty of *looking forward* to what *may* be, as well as of *remembering* what *has* been, and *feeling* what is. Most of our temporal ills are greatest in apprehension. This is a fear natural to Beings, who have the faculty of so looking into futurity, as to be aware of their liability to a thousand ills ; but who have not, of themselves, the power to prevent evil, or to resist it. Whether prosperity be in store for us, to prove our integrity ; or adversity be reserved, to try our faith—we are convinced, by the daily experience of our own weakness, that God only can give us strength to help in time of need. He alone can be our *sure* guide, amid the changes and chances with which we know this mortal life to be chequered.

The Collect therefore *first* petitions God, “ *mercifully* to receive our prayers,” when we implore

pardon for *present* sins—offer thanks for *present* mercies—and resign ourselves to him under *present* trials. It *then*, by an easy transition, passes to a consideration of *future* wants; and proceeds to supplicate the gracious aid of God, against the power and influence of *future* evil:—praying him so to inspire the soul with holy thoughts, and good resolutions, that whatever future doubts and difficulties may arise, we may neither be cast down by surprise, nor dismayed by unforeseen trials; but may be enlightened to *see* the *right* way, to *know* it, and to *follow* it:—may “both perceive and know” what things we ought to do, and have grace and “power faithfully to fulfil the same.”

The soul is thus sheltered and *fortified*, as it were, by a kind of bulwark; to which David alludes, when, in all the confidence of prayer, he declares the Almighty to be “his *fortress* and deliverer.” So guarded, we are shielded from *future* evil—fortified against *useless* anticipations of future difficulties—and prepared for *all* adversities. We learn to understand—and to practise in its proper sense—the advice of our blessed Lord, “to take no *heed*,” no *over-anxious—unworthy* heed “for the morrow, for “the morrow shall take care for the things of itself: “sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof<sup>1</sup>.” Thus casting, with humility and thankfulness, all our *cares* upon the *Lord*, we acknowledge that a Christian should “*rejoice alway*<sup>2</sup>” in God his Saviour.

How *possible* it is for the soul *thus* to live to God, let the example of Noah, of Abraham, of David, of

<sup>1</sup> Matt. vi. 34.

<sup>2</sup> Phil. iv. 4.

Daniel tell; and, above all, the example of our blessed Saviour himself! He *lived* and *died* in prayer—it *strengthened* him in his agony, and *supported* him in death.—His last breath was *prayer*.

In a word, prayer assists us in resisting every evil to which we are liable. It gains for us the aid of the Holy Spirit, to build up the ruins of our fallen nature; and raises the soul to its original structure, as a temple of the living God<sup>1</sup>. It is the link which unites earth to heaven, and man to God—it is at once our duty and our joy.



### 13. SECOND SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

*ALMIGHTY and everlasting God, who dost govern all things in heaven and earth; mercifully hear the supplications of thy people, and grant us thy peace all the days of our life, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

THE great object of a wise man's desire, as far as he is concerned for his *present* state of existence, is to gain a settled peace of mind, which shall be superior to human accidents. Prayer is the means of *gaining* that object. It not only *leads* the soul to God, but *fixes* it upon *him*, as the *only* Being, who can either save us altogether from spiritual trials, or support us under them—either *not* lead us into temptation—or deliver us from the evil it might

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. iii. 16.

bring with it: "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace  
 "whose mind is stayed on thee<sup>1</sup>:" he shall not be  
 afraid of evil tidings—"his heart is fixed, trusting  
 "in the Lord<sup>2</sup>."

This holy confidence in God is felt, in proportion  
 as we convince ourselves of the *infinity* of his *power*,  
 the *depth* of his *wisdom*, and the *extent* of his *good-*  
*ness*; and nothing will more firmly establish in our  
 minds *that* conviction, than serious contemplation  
 upon the works of creation, as they are displayed to  
 us in the glories of the firmament, and in the course  
 of this world's ordering. Our heavenly Father is  
 therefore addressed in *this* Collect, as the "Almighty  
 "and everlasting God, who governs all things both  
 "in heaven and earth."

By thus addressing the Almighty, we are led to  
 consider his infinite *power*, as an argument for a  
 firm faith, on *our* part, in his providential *care*; and,  
 at the same time, we adduce it as a strong plea for  
 the especial exercise, on *his* part, of *mercy* towards  
*us*, who inhabit a world, which, though but a speck  
 in the creation, is still sustained by *Him*.

The address is worded with much attention to  
 the natural workings of the human mind. The  
 sentiments of awe, with which we contemplate God  
 in his Majesty, as the Governor of the heavens,  
 would sink into fear, if they were not regulated by  
 feelings of confidence in his love, when we meditate  
 upon him, as the governor of the earth also. He  
 who beholds the starry firmament, with proper feel-  
 ings, and a just sense of the nature of the objects he

<sup>1</sup> Isaiah xxvi. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Psalm cxii. 7.

views, cannot but contrast their *glory* with his own *littleness*—his own comparative insignificance. But he knows that the Being, whose power is every moment exercised in sustaining the glorious worlds which he contemplates, careth also for *him*. That the same divine care and superintendance, the same wisdom, the same infinite and all-present providence, is exercised in causing the grass to grow for the cattle, and the “herb for the service of man, that he “may bring forth food out of the earth<sup>1</sup>,” as to sustain, in their heavenly courses, suns and their systems. Nothing is too vast for the *power* of God—nothing is too mean for his *care*.

David takes up this idea, and reasons upon it with all the beauty which characterizes the strains of the sweet Psalmist of Israel. He contemplates the immensity of God’s power:—he endeavours to realize to himself the immeasurable greatness, the wonderful omnipresence, and consequent omniscience of the Lord. He considers that to behold the things even of *heaven*, is (as he terms it), *humility* in the Almighty<sup>2</sup>, and thinks it almost impossible, that the creature should be allowed to pass the intermediate space between him and his Creator, and approach the throne of his divine majesty: “I am a worm “and no man,”—“the thoughts of men are vanity.” He corrects his fear and quiets his apprehensions, by reflecting, that still wider is the separation between God and our repented sins: “as far as the “east is from the west,” that is, as far as imagination can conceive of distance, “so far hath he set

<sup>1</sup> Psalm civ. 14.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. cxiii. 6.



“our sins from him;” so much nearer hath he drawn us to him by cords of love, through Jesus Christ his Son.

Who then is in trouble?—Let *him* flee unto the *Lord* his God; whose *power* is so great, that all worlds are in subjection unto him; and whose *providence* is so mercifully vouchsafed to the *least* of his creatures, that not a sparrow falleth to the ground without his knowledge; nor a hair of our head perisheth, but he knoweth it altogether. If he careth for the beasts that perish; for the plant that withereth; surely we may trust in him to care for man. He will not more regard *things* formed, than the *Being* for whom he formed them. He will not more regard perishable worlds than man, for whom these worlds were made—who will hereafter be *immortal*—and for whom an immortality of happiness hath been prepared by the Son of God. It is this *last* consideration, which led St. Paul to urge a holy confidence in prayer, to every one called by the name of Christ: “He that spareth not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with *Him* also freely give us *all* things<sup>1</sup>?” In my affliction therefore, I will *pray*—pray to *Him* who doth *govern all* things, both in heaven and earth, and ordereth them for *our good*.

Periods there doubtless are in life, when the soul is so far oppressed by the severity of trial, temporal or spiritual, as well nigh to sink under sorrow and distress: one dark cloud of misery weighs down its powers; in its desolateness it is ready to exclaim,

<sup>1</sup> Rom. viii. 32.

“ my burden is too heavy for me to bear.” In such an hour, O ! the blessedness of the Christian’s privilege. To prayer he flees for refuge, nor flees in vain ! The turbulence of the storm is *then* calmed. Thou, O Lord God omnipotent ! dost reign, and all is well : thou art my strong hold, whereunto I may *always* resort. Every *earthly* comfort hath forsaken me ; but I am *not* desolate, because *not* forsaken by my God : “ I *will* trust then in the Lord, and stay “ upon my God <sup>1</sup>.”



## 14. THIRD SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

*ALMIGHTY and everlasting God, mercifully look upon our infirmities, and, in all our dangers and necessities, stretch forth thy right hand to help and defend us, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

So wide is the difference between the Creator and his creatures ; between *Him* and *Us*, his *fallen* creatures, that whenever we approach him, whether to confess our sins, and supplicate pardon for them, or to pray for his grace, or to praise him for his mercies, we cannot use terms too deeply expressive of humility. Indeed, humility is the certain fruit of a heart, wherein true religion is duly cultivated, and is most conspicuous in those whose lives are adorned with the most exemplary piety. The more we con-

<sup>1</sup> Isaiah l. 10.

template the perfections of God, and compare the *perfect* services which his law *requires*, with our *imperfect fulfilment* of them, the more readily we own, in the language of our Liturgy, that we are "miserable sinners," that there is "no health in us." For if, by the divine blessing upon our endeavours after holiness, we be preserved from *wilful* sin, still we are conscious of continual failures in our duty to God—still conscious of many "negligences and ignorances," which must either be pardoned or punished.

These *infirmities*, as the Collect terms them, we pray God to look upon *mercifully*; for though many of them may be "ignorances," yet, as they are a breaking of the *perfect* law of God, they are pardoned *only* by the *mercy* of God, through Jesus Christ his Son. We therefore, in all humility of heart, address ourselves to God, and offer up our prayer, that he would strengthen us, in all dangers and necessities, through which, not our own strength, not our own plans, not our own wisdom—through which nothing less than *His almighty* power, and *His everlasting* mercy can conduct us in safety.

Of all our *infirmities*, it is perhaps not the least, that, amid the evils and perplexities to which we are liable, we lose our hold of that holy peace, which a *firm* faith would secure to us. How often is the Christian compelled, even in the exercise of the sincerest faith, to call out "Lord, I believe!" *but* "help thou mine unbelief." I *believe*, O Lord, that thou art ordering all things well, but such is my *infirmity* of spirit, that when thy chastening hand is upon me, in trouble, I cannot apply my

faith;—I forget that thou *chastenest* whom thou *lovest*; and that *all* things, even sickness, sorrow, and distress, work together for good, to those who love and fear thee. Who, amongst the afflicted, might not own, that such oftentimes would be the language of his heart, if he gave it utterance? Who feels not that the *work* of faith is an *arduous* work? To bear with patience the sorrows of *this* life, looking forward by faith to their end in the *next*; to go steadily through *evil* report and *good* report, neither *exalted* by the *one*, nor *depressed* by the *other*; to have our actions misconstrued, and our motives wilfully misunderstood, yet neither to murmur nor repine; to have our good evil spoken of, and our efforts for peace met with scorn, yet to ensure peace, and strive to answer evil with good.—All this requires a freedom from infirmity, which nothing but the Spirit of God can give; nothing but his almighty power supply.

The Epistle for this Collect is most aptly chosen. The duties to which St. Paul there exhorts us, are exactly such as our *infirmities* would disable us from performing. Thus, for instance, the Apostle often felt—as who does not naturally feel?—rising indignation at unworthy treatment: he attributes such a feeling to our *infirmity* or weakness of faith. If our faith were *not* weak, we should remember *Him*, who tells us, “Love your enemies;” and who does not allow excuse even for the infirmity of indignation towards those who evil intreat, and of malice persecute us; “Bless them that curse you, recompence no man evil for evil.” “Vengeance is mine;” “I will repay, saith the Lord.” “Therefore if

“ thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give  
 “ him drink: for in so doing, thou shalt heap coals  
 “ of fire on his head<sup>1</sup>.” “ Be not overcome of evil,  
 “ but overcome evil with good.”

How wisely then are we early taught, by our truly Christian Church, to beseech God to look upon our infirmities *mercifully*; and, in every trial of our faith—in all our dangers and necessities—to stretch forth his right hand to help and defend us! For it is not only in this; and in other instances mentioned by the Apostle, that *infirmity* in faith evidences our frailty; its overpowering influence weighs down the spirit of a man, on almost every occasion in life, where self-denial and self-controul are called into action. Indeed, in happier hours of holy converse with our God, how deeply are we led to lament, that in the hour of trial and temptation, our good resolutions failed us, that we gave way to anger, against an enemy; yielded to fear in time of trouble; and in perplexity and doubt, were too often forgetful of the only Being, whose mercy and whose strength will *never fail* them who trust in Him.

Though troubles compass me, and infirmities press upon me, in Thee, O Lord, shall be my confidence. Thou wilt pardon my infirmities for thy Son's sake, and help me for thine own sake.—In thee, O Lord, will I trust, let me never be confounded.

<sup>1</sup> The meaning of the passage is this—that as fire softens and melts the hardest substances, even iron itself; so, by returning good for evil, we may hope to soften and melt into kindness the proudest heart, and relax the most stubborn enmity.



## 15. FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

*O GOD, who knowest us to be set in the midst of so many and great dangers, that by reason of the frailty of our nature we cannot always stand upright; Grant to us such strength and protection, as may support us in all dangers, and carry us through all temptations, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

THOUGH our blessed Saviour was proclaimed at his advent as the “Prince of *Peace* <sup>1</sup>,” his disciples entered *not* upon a *peaceful* course, but were subject as well to *temporal* as to *spiritual* trials. *Both* awaited them. Indeed, in the beautiful and affecting prayer which he offered up for them, before he was removed from earth to heaven; he distinctly impressed upon their minds, that the life of his followers was to be a life of constant struggle against evil: and for this reason; that they were not to withdraw themselves from the world, but to live in it, to the glory of their God, and the well-being of their fellow-creatures: “I pray not,” saith he, “that thou, *O Father*, shouldest take them out “ of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them “ from the evil <sup>2</sup>.” Now, thus to live, amidst the dangers and temptations of the world, yet *free* from

<sup>1</sup> Isaiah ix. 6.

<sup>2</sup> John xvii.—The whole chapter should be read as a most earnest and affecting prayer of a dying friend and benefactor.

the *evil* of it, is so manifestly not in our own power; is so far beyond our own strength; that our Church, in the several parts of her Liturgy, continually refers to the necessity we *all* lie under, of gaining God's gracious support and protection, to help our *infirmities*; and to supply *that* strength, which alone can enable us to resist evil, but which we cannot ourselves supply. In *this* Collect, therefore, are renewed, the confession of weakness, and the strain of supplication for strength, which were offered in the one immediately preceding. God knoweth us to be set in the midst of many and great dangers; and yet he doth *not remove* us from them, but guardeth us from their *evil* influence. Our blessed Lord and Master ordained that so it should be: he did not ask that we should be taken from the world, but that we should be delivered from the *evil* of it.

It is *this* consideration which supports the Christian in the deepest distress, and under the most powerful temptations. He is not dismayed in the hour of *danger*, because he knows that thereunto he is called; and that God will grant him strength and protection; neither is he surprised by *temptation* to evil, because he knows it to be the divine ordinance, that he should, for a season, continue in a world which is full of temptation; and he believes that God is able and willing to give him strength to resist, and ultimately to overcome it.

*Without* this faith, as a city of refuge whereunto we may flee from our enemies, our state—weak and frail as it is by nature—would be altogether wretched, and utterly hopeless. For what is life, when consi-

dered only as to our *present* state of existence, but a continued succession of *changes*<sup>1</sup>, which baffle our *counsels*; and of *chances*, which mock our *prudence*? Cares, like restless waves, follow each other so unceasingly, that *few* men can do otherwise than confess with Job, that “Man is born to trouble, as the sparks fly upward.” Sometimes unavoidable poverty clouds the days of health; or sickness embitters prosperity. Sometimes the distractions of envy overtake us; or we are pursued by the hatred of one to whom we have undesignedly given offence: or malice persecutes us; or our good name is undeservedly assailed, and we become the victims of uncharitableness. Our danger *then* consists in the temptation which such trials hold out to us to be *uncharitable* in return, and to *repine* against the dispensations of our God. At another time, our danger lies in *prosperity*. The *pleasures* of life, its riches, and its honours, tempt us to forsake the service of religion, and the welfare of our soul. *Devoted to this* world, we are *forgetful* of the *next*.

But, suppose we are spared *these* trials from *without*, dangers from *within* await us. The soul perhaps is wounded with the sting of conscious sin; it is disquieted. Disquiet would sink into despondency, and despondency into despair; but *faith* preserves us from *this* danger also. The faithful soul fortifies itself in the *Lord*. It remembers *that* Being, who, whilst he knoweth us to be set in the

<sup>1</sup> Thus our Liturgy teaches us to pray, that “among all the *changes* and *chances* of this mortal life, we may ever be defended by *God’s* most gracious and ready *help*.”

midst of so many and great dangers, that by reason of our frailty we *cannot* always stand upright, will therefore grant to us such strength and protection, as may support us in all those dangers, and carry us through all those temptations. Animated by this holy confidence, and having faith to ask and a desire to receive the supporting aid of the Holy Spirit, the Christian, however *frail* his *nature* be, allows himself in *no* failure of duty towards either God or man; no murmur against God, when in distress; no uncharitableness towards man, when oppressed. He considers, that though the natural man be *weak*, the spiritual man is “*strong* in the *Lord*, and in the “power of *his* might.” Man may be *frail* and wavering of purpose; the *dangers* which surround him may be many and great; the *temptations* which assail him may be numerous and perplexing; but in all dangers he may be *supported*, and through all temptations carried *safe*, by an *Almighty* Being, to whom all things in heaven and earth do bow and obey—even by his *Father* and his *God*; through Jesus Christ.



## 16. FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

*O LORD, we beseech thee to keep thy church and household continually in thy true religion: that they, who do lean only upon the hope of thy heavenly grace, may evermore be defended by thy mighty power, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

THE framers of our Liturgy, knowing the prone-

ness of man to fall into extremes, even in matters of religion, were anxious that *every* feeling of the suppliant should be brought under *due* regulation. They have, therefore, with pious wisdom, so introduced all the doctrines of the Gospel, that from the *appropriate* place assigned to *each*, they have severally, from their very order of place, the greater weight and influence. Hope is not permitted to grow into presumption, nor Fear to degenerate into despair; whilst the *one* feeling is quieted by the divine *promises* to the *humble*, the *other* is regulated by dread of the *threatenings* against the *high-minded*. If we be taught to pray for divine aid, as our only ground of safety in the way of holiness, we are *also* instructed, that even the Spirit of God is received in *vain*, indeed *grieved*<sup>1</sup> (as the Scripture term is,) unless it find the soul earnestly desirous to *co-operate* in working out its own salvation. Thus, having in the *preceding* Collects lamented our weakness and folly, and confessed that having of ourselves no strength to help ourselves, we trust to God for strength—We, in the *present* Collect, further pray, that whilst we *depend* upon *God*, we may *not* be *wanting* to *ourselves*; that whilst we lean upon another for support, we do not render that support vain by want of exertion on our own part. The Spirit of God is to *lead*, but we must *follow*. If, when his directing influence is vouchsafed, *we* are *inactive*, we cannot reasonably expect to advance in our Christian course; a traveller, whilst he either sleeps, or sits idle, advances not towards

<sup>1</sup> Ephes. iv. 30.



his home. Whatever strength and power he may have, they will not enable him to perform the appointed journey, unless he bring them into action, by the exertion of his *will*. So the *lukewarm* Christian, however he may encourage himself in the hope that the grace of God *is*, or will be granted to his prayers, makes no progress in his pilgrimage, until, by a strenuous *exertion* of his *Reason* and his *Will* divine gifts as well as *grace* itself—he burst from his slumber, cast off his listlessness, and follow the course which the Holy Spirit of God doth point out to him. *Then* it is—but *not till* then—that the grace of God is *sufficient* for him.

Our blessed Saviour hath left us his own example, both to instruct and to encourage us, in the way of godliness. *He* “leaned only upon God’s heavenly grace:” yet, when *so* supported, he was *not* himself *listless* or *inactive* in his course. When he set himself to the work of feeding the hungry by miracle, his *dependance* was upon *God*; and therefore, to *God* he made his *prayer* for blessing. Throughout his temptation in the wilderness; during his agony in the garden; in his trial on the cross; *God* was his *refuge*, *God* his *support*. But he did not *so* lean upon heavenly aid, as to neglect exertion on his own part. Every energy of his soul was awakened—every faculty roused into action, that by a life of benevolent activity, and by a *voluntary* death—the perfection of benevolence—he might work the *work* of him who sent him.

Thus instructed—thus encouraged by the example of the glorious Son of God—we may well strive to avoid the extremes of an *inactive* faith in divine

grace on the *one* hand, and of a vain self-confidence on the *other*. A sense of infirmity and frailty, on our own part, brings us to *Him*, who can give strength, and will vouchsafe mercy ; but it takes not away the necessity of our own most strenuous exertions ; still less, is it a justification for sins, negligences, and ignorances. St. Paul confesses his entire dependence upon God, for all spiritual knowledge in fulfilling the duties of his office ; but he at the same time declares that his *natural ignorance* of duty, though it causes him to lean upon heavenly aid, is no justification of error. At the very time that he avows his imperfection and unworthiness—"I know nothing of myself,"—he disclaims to take advantage of such avowal—"yet am I *not hereby* justified<sup>1</sup>." Yea ! though his conscience was clear of any wilful sin, and acquitted him of wilfully neglecting any duty in his high office, as a steward of the mysteries of God ; yet he was aware that in the sight of God who requires perfection, no man living shall be justified ; because no man living is without some sin. He therefore would not speak of himself as absolutely clear before God.

Well, then, may we beseech the Lord, to keep his Church and household continually in *this* his *true* religion : which consists—as exemplified both by St. Paul and Jesus Christ the Righteous—in an union of humble dependence upon God, and of a strenuous co-operation of our own wills and affections, in working out our salvation. We may thus hope to be led safely ; defended by *His* almighty power, whose

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. iv. 4.

delight is to strengthen the weak, and support the fainting soul:—to be a shadow from the heat, a refuge from the storm, and a defence in time of trouble—bringing comfort to the distressed, and offering salvation unto all.

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## 17. SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

*O GOD, whose blessed Son was manifested that he might destroy the works of the devil, and make us the sons of God, and heirs of eternal life; grant us, we beseech thee, that, having this hope, we may purify ourselves, even as he is pure; that, when he shall appear again with power and great glory, we may be made like unto him in his eternal and glorious kingdom: where with thee, O Father, and thee, O Holy Ghost, he liveth and reigneth, ever one God, world without end. Amen.*

THE opening of this Collect contains a concise, yet impressive *declaration* of the object which our Redeemer had in view, when he was manifested in the flesh. He came down from heaven, and was made man, and dwelt among us, in order “that he “might destroy the works of the devil<sup>1</sup>.” That wicked fallen angel had brought into the world sin and death; whereby the beauty of all God’s creation was sullied: *Every* part of creation, animate and inanimate, rational and irrational, underwent a change.

<sup>1</sup> 1 John iii. 8.

The very ground,—which before the entrance of the Evil Spirit into Paradise, gave fruits and flowers, unfading and unfailing,—was cursed; and of itself brought forth only thorns and briers. But chiefly was a change effected in *man*: for upon *him* fell the curse of *death*. His *body*,—created for immortality—was condemned to the dust whence it had been taken: and his *soul*—formed “in righteousness and “true holiness,”—even in the image of its Maker—was doomed to be cast out far from happiness and God. As the spiritual foe *began* his work of destruction upon the soul of man—so would he have continued it, unsubdued and unchecked, had not the Son of God been accepted as an atonement for sin. By this atonement, he destroyed the works of the devil, restoring the fairest part of creation—the *soul*—to its original excellence, and making men again capable of becoming “the sons of God, and heirs of the “kingdom.”—Making *death* no longer a *curse*, but a *blessing*: no longer an extinction of hope—but the gate to a scene of everlasting joy.

Upon this declaration is founded a most beautiful prayer for our welfare, both in *this* world and in the *next*. We pray, that, whilst we are in the *body*, “we may purify ourselves, even as *he*, our great example, is pure;” and that, when freed from the body, “we may be made like unto him, in his eternal “and glorious kingdom.” The attainment of everlasting happiness, is the ultimate object of our petition in the Collect; though we very properly *first* pray for the attainment of *purity*, inasmuch as *purity* is the appointed preparation, both for attaining and enjoying that happiness. Indeed, *reason* alone,

might suffice to assure us, that—if the happiness of heaven consists in being admitted into the presence of a perfectly *pure* and *holy* Being, and serving him eternally, with *pure* and *holy* worship—we cannot enjoy, or even comprehend *such* happiness, unless our hearts and minds be already made pure. To a mind, whose views are impure, the employment of the inhabitants of heaven would be torment; and to a heart, devoted to the pleasures of sense, the joys of a spiritual state would be bitterness.

But the *revealed* word of God is distinct upon this point. In the book of the Revelation of St. John, the Angel of the Covenant warns us, by a most awful and awakening admonition—as instructive in sentiment, as dignified in style—to be pure and holy *here*, if we would be happy and glorified *hereafter*: for though death changes our conditions, it changes not the dispositions of our soul: it neither sanctifies the unholy, nor robs the holy of his reward. “He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still<sup>1</sup>.” The stirring motive to heed this admonition St. Paul supplies: “*without holiness, no man shall see the Lord*<sup>2</sup>.”

We are *encouraged* to persevere in this appointed course of purity by the *hope*, that Jesus Christ, as he came on earth to destroy the works of the devil, will reconcile us to God as his sons; and make us fit to be heirs of his heavenly kingdom. The whole sentiment of this Collect, is in strict harmony with the

<sup>1</sup> Rev. xxii. 11.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. xii. 14.



Epistle from St. John, which accompanies it. The Apostle, in a passage of more than usual beauty of style, magnifies the love of God towards man; and animated by the spirit of that divine benevolence which he is exalting, addresses the Church in a strain at once affecting and sublime:—"Behold  
 " what manner of love the Father hath bestowed  
 " upon us, that we should be called the sons of  
 " God! therefore the world knoweth us not, because  
 " it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons  
 " of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall  
 " be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we  
 " shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is<sup>1</sup>." He then shews, in the clearest manner, that the proper *effects* of this glorious recovery to a state of grace, are to be looked for in a *pure* and holy life: "and every man that hath *this* hope in him, purifieth himself, even as he is pure<sup>2</sup>." Nor must any man plead the *strength* of temptation as a reason for *failure* in purity and holiness. Our Saviour "was manifested to destroy the works of the devil:" not with a view of superseding a constant struggle against sin on our own part; but of effectually co-operating with us, and giving help in time of need. If therefore we "resist the devil, he will flee from us<sup>3</sup>:" and we shall find that "with every temptation, there will be a way of escape," through Jesus Christ.

Power being thus given to us, sufficient for the work, let us at least *strive* "to purify ourselves,

<sup>1</sup> 1 John iii. 1, 2.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. iii. 3.

<sup>3</sup> James iv. 7.

“ even as *He* is pure :” no longer “ double-minded <sup>1</sup>,” but obedient in *deed*, and in *word*, and more especially in *thought*, to the Will and Spirit of God :— that, when his blessed Son “ shall appear again “ with power and great glory, we may be made like “ unto him, in his eternal and glorious kingdom :” where, with the Father, and the Holy Ghost, he liveth and reigneth, ever one God, world without end. Amen.



## 18. SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY.

*O LORD, we beseech thee favourably to hear the prayers of thy people : that we who are justly punished for our offences, may be mercifully delivered by thy goodness : for the glory of thy name, through Jesus Christ our Saviour : who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.*

THE titles of this, and the two succeeding Collects, require explanation.—

SEPTUAGESIMA means the number *Seventy*. SEXAGESIMA, the number *Sixty*. QUINQUAGESIMA, the number *Fifty*.

*Quinquagesima* Sunday is so called, because it happens *fifty* days before *Easter* : The Sunday before it is called *Sexagesima*—not because it is *sixty* days before Easter, for it is *only* fifty-seven ;

<sup>1</sup> James iv. 8.

—but because *Sixty* is the next round number. In like manner *this* Collect is called the Collect for *Septuagesima* Sunday, seventy days before Easter.

The general spirit which these three Collects breathe, is that of deep *Humility*; a spirit more especially required in the Christian, at this time, when he is preparing his mind to observe, with due and appropriate seriousness, the returning season of *Lent*.

It is under this powerful impression of self-humiliation, that we beseech the Lord “favourably “to hear the *prayers* of his people.” At least, this expression evidently supposes the petitioner to have his soul deeply impressed with the characteristic spirit of Christianity, which requires its followers to “*humble* themselves in the sight of the “Lord<sup>1</sup>.” Therefore in approaching the throne of the Almighty, we feel, and confess ourselves, *unworthy* to offer unto him any *sacrifice*—even the sacrifice of *Prayer*. If our prayers be accepted, they owe their acceptance to his *grace* and *favour*. They are the expression of “our bounden *duty* and “*service*.” He, however, is merciful—*not* viewing our frailty and unworthiness—“*not* weighing our “merits—*but* pardoning our offences through Jesus “Christ our Lord<sup>2</sup>.”

<sup>1</sup> James iv. 10.

<sup>2</sup> This humility is finely portrayed in the prayer of our Communion Service, from which this passage is taken: the feeling of humility is there most fully avowed; and, at the same time, admirably regulated.

The prayer here alluded to, follows the Lord's Prayer, in the latter part of the service; and is offered up after the congregation have communicated.

As the exercise of one duty naturally and almost imperceptibly leads to the exercise of others, and as each assists in removing successively the various obstacles which severally present themselves to us, in the course of our Christian duty, so, when we have once entered upon the practice of any particular grace, humility, or zeal, or self-denial, or hope; either the difficulties of the duty vanish, or if they increase, we become more and more equal to contend against them. What at first we attempt *reluctantly*, we are at last induced to perform *willingly*; we go on from “strength to strength,” till we find the “service of God to be perfect freedom.” Thus, when we are sufficiently humble to feel that our prayers are accepted only by *grace*, when we can understand that our preservation from evil is so far from being *deserved*, that it is vouchsafed of *unmerited* favour; we are soon brought to confess that whatever sorrows overtake us, they are as nothing compared with our unworthiness. We confess, that by the heaviest calamities “we are but justly punished for our offences:”—“It is of the Lord’s mercies that we are not consumed<sup>1</sup>.”

Nor does the Christian consider himself degraded by such confessions of infirmity and unworthiness; for he is not thereby prevented approaching the living God, but rather rendered more fit for his service. So, in *this* Collect, with humility indeed, but in a well-grounded faith, we beseech the Almighty, by every availing plea, to deliver us from the evil of sin. We plead his mercy, his goodness,

<sup>1</sup> Lam. iii. 22.

his glory, his covenanted promise of redemption through his Son Jesus Christ. We plead, first his *mercy*: “O! save us for thy mercies’ sake<sup>1</sup>.” “For thy mercy endureth for ever<sup>2</sup>.” We next plead his *goodness*: for “his goodness endureth continually<sup>3</sup>.” And that the deliverance which we pray for, may the more readily be granted, we further plead “the *glory* of his name.” And *thus*, in conformity with other parts of our Liturgy, we, in the Litany, pray of God, “for the *glory* of his name, “to turn from us all those evils which we most “righteously have deserved:” and to “arise, help “us, and deliver us, for his *name* and *honour’s* “sake<sup>4</sup>.”

It should be observed, that the order in which we present to the Almighty our several grounds of petition is admirably preserved, God’s *mercy* must *precede* his *goodness* towards *fallen* creatures. It is his *mercy* which calls forth the exercise of his *love*; and *both* must be infinitely exerted before he would save us for his name and honour’s sake. But after all, we should in vain plead his *glory*, his *goodness*,

<sup>1</sup> Psalm xxxi. 16. Mercy is an attribute, for the display of which there was no room before the fall. Adam, in innocence, was incapable of receiving mercy; because mercy implies—pity, tender compassion, and a willingness to pardon offence. Adam had not then offended, and knew neither pain nor sorrow; he therefore required neither pardon, nor compassion, nor pity. He lived by the goodness of God exercised by divine love.

*Fallen* man also lives by the goodness of God; but there is a superadded motive for its exercise. That goodness is now vouchsafed by God, not of his love only, but “for his love and *mercy’s* “sake.”

<sup>2</sup> Psalm cvi. 1.      <sup>3</sup> Psalm lii. 1.      <sup>4</sup> Psalm cvi. 8.      Ibid. xlv. 26.



his *mercy*, if we had not some one to put in the plea, and advocate the cause for us. And since no prayer can be successfully offered up for the mercy of God, no plea avail for the exercise of his love, no hope encouraged, that for his name's sake he will save us, *except* through Jesus Christ; so He—the Saviour—is mentioned *last* in order. He is our *final* hope. *All* our pleadings must not only begin, but *end* in *him*.

The Christian further believes, that the *Holy Spirit*—according to the appointment of our blessed Lord himself—is the *means* whereby God now *communicates* with man, on the subject of his redemption; the Collect therefore closes in an eminently Christian strain, with the mention of the Holy Ghost, as equal in honour with the Father and the Son; as united with them in the merciful work of man's redemption; and reigning together with them, ever *one* God, world without end.



## 19. SEXAGESIMA SUNDAY.

*O LORD God, who seest that we put not our trust in any thing that we do; mercifully grant that by thy power we may be defended against all adversity, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

IN this concise prayer we have an opening of the whole heart to God. In the *first* part of it, there is a plain disavowal of “trust in any thing that we “do.” In the *second*, is a petition, that divine

power would afford the defence we need “ against all adversity.”

This disavowal of trust in ourselves is made with an unreservedness, which invites, though humbly, the scrutiny of Him, who seeth and knoweth all that we do and think; and reminds us of the zealous earnestness which characterized the answer of Peter to his enquiring Lord,—“ Lord! thou knowest *all* things: thou *knowest* that I love thee.” What can be a more convincing mode of affirming our sincerity, than an appeal to the omniscience of an all-seeing God? “ Thou, O God, seest *all* things, thou “ seest and knowest that we put not our trust in “ any thing we do.” Nothing but *sincerity* could prompt such an appeal—nothing but *faith* could offer it. Happy they, who can so lay open their hearts, their desires, their intentions, their motives, to *Him* from whom no secrets are hid! Aware of the many adversities, to which in life they are continually exposed, they trust for support under them, *not* to any thing *they* do, but solely to the power of *God*, granted for his mercy’s sake, in Jesus Christ.

How admirably does this prayer give expression to the different though kindred feelings of humility and faith! How readily does it lead the soul to a confession of lowliness which debases not, and to a declaration of trust which puffeth not up<sup>1</sup>. It exhibits the suppliant as striving with earnest zeal, to do all he can to work out his own salvation; yet as aware, that *all* he can do is *nothing* worth, as a ground of *trust*. He, therefore, wisely seeks from

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. xiii, 4. “ Charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up.”

the Lord God omnipotent, a defence against all adversity.

It were well for us, if from our hearts we could adopt such a petition. Indeed the feelings of humility and faith which it expresses, ought to be encouraged by us, with reference not only to the *final* object of our hopes, everlasting salvation; but to *every thing* wherein we may be concerned. For while we are all liable to adversity, we are all unable to defend ourselves against it. Every man has his sorrow; the brightest countenance finds careful thoughts sometimes to cloud it. The highest spirits have some secret anxiety to weigh them down—nay, “even in the midst of laughter, how often the heart “is sad!” The very *liability* to adverse circumstances gives even present *ease* a character of *inquietude*. The most prudent measures of the rich and great to secure to themselves the blessings of this world, are often vain; for misery has a thousand avenues to the heart. If poverty be shut out, then perhaps sickness is permitted to enter: some unwelcome visitor is sure to find entrance. The wisdom of the wisest man, who trusts to his own plans for escape from adversity, is but foolishness; his counsels for security are soon put to nought, when his time of sorrow comes. He perhaps has hitherto lived high in honour, deservedly enjoying a good name, an object of admiration, and almost of envy; but even *he* must feel the penalty of mortality: and sorrow, which reached him not through the common avenues of sickness, poverty, or the death of friends, deals with him as with us all, strikes him where he is

most vulnerable—his good name perisheth ; and his wisdom is accounted folly.

Humility and faith, therefore, should be the prevailing feelings of our soul ; and should severally be exercised, as the one or the other, or both be called forth, either by the severe trials of adversity, or the more dangerous temptations of prosperity.

Let each of us, when under the pressure of distress in mind, body, or estate, consider, that though it has pleased God to permit adversity to fall upon us, mercy still guides his counsels : he would sanctify and purify us in the furnace of affliction ; even as gold is tried in the fire. Hence, our trust in him should be ever unshaken—we should confirm ourselves in the expectation of *final* deliverance, by a holy and exalted faith in the promise of eternal TRUTH—that “ all things shall *work together* for “ *good* to those who love and fear God.”

And when the course of our life is prosperous, let us *then* practise *humility*. If we are wise, or mighty, or rich, let us glory neither in our wisdom—nor might—nor riches—let us not put our trust in any thing that we do : let us cease from man, for “ wherein “ *is he* to be accounted of ? Man is but vanity.” Let him that glorieth, glory in *this* ; that he “ under- “ standeth and knoweth me,” saith the Lord <sup>1</sup>.

Indeed, throughout the whole course of our life, we should do well to trust to that infinitely wise and good Being who ordereth *all* things, both in heaven and earth : let us cast all our care upon Him, who careth for us—and uniting this humble opinion of

<sup>1</sup> Jer. ix. 24.

our *own* power, with well-grounded faith in *His*, pray for his gracious aid to defend us against whatever evil, temporal or spiritual, may come nigh us : we shall then find that he will mercifully grant our petition, as shall seem to him most expedient for us ; and, by his power, either defend us against all adversity, or support us under it : granting us in this world knowledge of his truth, and in the world to come, life everlasting ; through Jesus Christ our Lord.



## 20. QUINQUAGESIMA SUNDAY.

*O LORD, who hast taught us that all our doings without charity are nothing worth ; send thy Holy Ghost, and pour into our hearts that most excellent gift of charity, the very bond of peace and of all virtues : without which, whosoever liveth is counted dead before thee : grant this, for thine only Son Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.*

WE observed, that the Collects for Septuagesima, and the two following Sundays, were marked in a peculiar degree, with a spirit of *humility*.

The *two* former taught us humility before *God* : this teaches us humility towards *men*.

It is true, that in the *words* of the Collect, we pray for *charity* ; but we *virtually* pray for *humility* also —since nothing but the deepest humility can induce us to exercise a charity, which requires victory over self-love, and a total disregard to every thing but



what tends to the honour of God, the welfare of our fellow-creatures, and the good of our own souls. To shew then the force of the Collect, we must turn our attention to the Epistle which accompanies it, and contemplate the character of *charity* there drawn by St. Paul; every feature of which derives its pervading grace and beauty from *humility*.

Since nothing, however, can enable us to be thus humble, but *divine* aid, we pray for this charity, as the gracious *gift* of *God*, by his Holy Spirit.

“Charity suffereth long, and is kind.” Now, to suffer long, and yet be kind to those who inflict the suffering, is a most convincing proof that we are clothed with that humility, which becomes the followers of the lowly Saviour, and which his Spirit could alone impart to us; because against such endurance our *nature revolts*.

“Charity envieth not.” The Christian cannot envy: in sincere humility he “esteems others better than himself;” he is therefore not surprised, if their lot be better than his own. Indeed, *what* is he to envy? Not the accidental advantages of worldly superiority. His view is carried higher, even to heaven; his ambition is, to gain *there* glory everlasting: and the hope of this *future* gain, is freely offered to *all*: therefore, no room is left for envy in that heart, which heavenly-mindedness occupies. Neither does charity fall into the other extreme of self-sufficiency. “It vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly.” The consciousness of spiritual advantages—even the means of grace here, and the hope of glory hereafter—excites neither vanity, nor pride. Nay, the Christian

“seeketh not his own.” He can overlook his own interest for the sake of others; he is not extreme to seek the least credit for good actions, for right intentions, or for any other excellences, which, through divine grace, may influence his heart, or mark his conduct.

Thus gradually confirmed in his self-control, and calmed in his judgment, “he is not easily provoked,” but bears offence with unruffled mind; remembering *Him*, who bore all offences with meekness, and, though “provoked every day,” neither resented, nor complained. Fearful to judge the actions, and misconstrue the motives of others, he “thinketh no evil;” nor does he allow his mind to dwell upon the evil ways of others, lest uncharitable thoughts be strengthened, as they are dwelt upon, and bring forth uncharitable actions. He “frets not himself,” lest he “be moved to do evil<sup>1</sup>.”

But though he has so learned Jesus Christ, that he can exercise forbearance, he has *not so* learned the Saviour, as to be indifferent, whether virtue or vice, holiness or wickedness prevail around him. *Simplicity* certainly marks his conduct; but, as St. Paul very opportunely adds, he does “not rejoice in *iniquity*.” He makes no excuse for *sin*, because he is *charitable* towards the *sinner*: indignant equally, when either irreligion or hypocrisy prevail; he rejoices only in the *truth*—rejoices, when men serve God in spirit and in truth; and live, as brethren ought to live, in charity and love.

The Apostle, having so far delineated the Christian

<sup>1</sup> Psalm xxxvii. 8.

character—meek, gentle, and forbearing, yet dignified, and animated by a fervent zeal for the honour of God—*thus* finishes the portrait.

Charity “beareth all things, believeth all things, “hopeth all things, endureth all things.” The Christian beareth all things patiently; that so giving proof of the vital influence of religion upon his *own* heart, he may win others to try its influence upon *theirs*. He also “believeth all things,” which may tend to others’ advantage: he does not suppose any to continue wilfully, or knowingly in an evil course: he rather *hopeth* all *good* things both *to* them and *for* them. In this stedfast striving for the honour of God, and the welfare of men, he “endureth all “things.” Nothing moves him from his purpose of shewing forth, in all he does, the bright influence of that charity which *never faileth*: which is the bond of peace, and of all virtue here, and the only grace which will survive for ever in heaven<sup>1</sup>: for it is not confined to the mere act of charitably relieving the sick and needy; it is a charity of the *affections*, and requires of us the exercise of every good disposition, of every generous sentiment towards others; not seeking our own. With this strict *self-denial*, it combines the most unbending *self-respect*, and allows no compromise with error, even while we commiserate the wanderer. It is, in fact, *such* love towards *man*, as can grow up with, and give evidence of, our love towards *God*. It embraces the sorrows and joys, the hopes and fears, the present and future interests of all mankind. Its sphere of action, there-

<sup>1</sup> See the Collect for the fourteenth Sunday after Trinity.

fore, has no limits: its circumference is infinite; its centre, God.

Such is the charity for which our Collect teaches us to pray, as "the bond of peace and of all virtue;" we pray for it as a gracious gift which God vouchsafes us by the aid of his Holy Spirit. *Without* this divine aid, we could neither expect the gift, nor have power or wisdom to exercise it: *with* this aid, though weak of ourselves, we shall be *strong* in the *Lord*; strong to suffer patiently, strong to resist envy, vanity, and selfishness; superior to provocation; thinking no evil; enabled to rejoice, *not* in *iniquity*, but in the *truth*: bearing, believing, hoping, enduring *all* things; looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith, the Foundation of our hope, the Fountain of our charity. Cold of heart and proud indeed must we be, if, as often as we contemplate St. Paul's beautiful character of divine charity, we do not cherish kindlier feelings towards the wants, the errors, and the offences of our fellow-creatures; if we do not confess the necessity of a more lowly estimate of ourselves; and, with love unfeigned towards both God and man, strive by divine grace to exercise that charity on earth, which constitutes the employment and the bliss of angels and of saints in heaven.

## 21. ASH WEDNESDAY.

*ALMIGHTY and everlasting God, who hatest nothing that thou hast made, and dost forgive the sins of all them that are penitent; create and make in us new and contrite hearts, that we, worthily lamenting our sins, and acknowledging our wretchedness, may obtain of thee, the God of all mercy, perfect remission and forgiveness; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

ASH WEDNESDAY is the first day of Lent<sup>1</sup>.

Its name is derived from the custom of penitents sitting in sackcloth and *ashes*; giving *public* testimony of sorrow for their sins. In the early ages of the Church, this public confession of sin was strictly enjoined for those offences, which the law of man might not be able to punish, but which were a scandal to the pure and perfect law of Christ. The practice is now disused: but our Church—aware that the human mind is much influenced by association arising from time, place, or person—takes occasion at *this* season, more immediately to urge upon us the exercise of a heart-felt repentance; justly consider-

<sup>1</sup> Lent is a Saxon word, meaning *Spring*.

By the *Lent Fast*, is meant therefore the *Spring Fast* of forty days before Easter; in allusion to our Saviour's having fasted *forty* days in the wilderness. *Our* fast is for forty days before Easter—*exclusive* of the intervening Sundays:—Sunday being never considered by our Church as a day of fasting.



ing, that no time can be more fitting to exercise ourselves as lowly penitents, than when we commemorate the humiliation of our blessed Lord in the wilderness: an event, which cannot fail to excite in our hearts, mingled sensations of joy and grief—gratitude and wonder. Indeed, serious meditation on the history of that event, both revives in the soul a just sense of its own weakness, under trial and temptation; and convinces us, that, to our penitence for past sins, should ever be added good resolutions for the time to come, with earnest, heartfelt prayer for the Holy Spirit, and a firm reliance upon his aid, “to amend our lives according to God’s holy word.”

The Collects, therefore, and the portions of Scripture appointed to be read with them during Lent, point out with peculiar force, the fatal consequences of sin, the miserable state of sinners, and the necessity for a hearty faith in God’s promises to pardon the sins of the truly penitent.

The present Collect opens with an affecting appeal to the universal love of God, which, as reconciled children through Christ, we implore him to extend to ourselves.

That God “hateth nothing that he hath made,” is a declaration, to the truth of which every thinking mind must readily assent. Reason and revelation do severally concur in establishing it as true. If the revealed word of God did not assure us, that He regards with parental care all the creatures of his power; the glories of the *natural* world would sufficiently convince us that “his mercy is over all his works.” How can He hate any thing that he has

made, when year by year he causeth each season to return in its course for the service of man ;—when day by day he biddeth the sun “ to shine upon the evil and the good ; ”—when every moment which he adds to our existence, proves his supporting hand—his watchful care—his divine providence—to be continually exerted for our good ! journey where you will ; travel to the remotest region of the world—where human footstep never trod—you will find not only that God is there, but that the proofs of his love are there also. You will perceive the flower of the field to blossom—the insect tribes to be on wing—nature, animate and inanimate, to rejoice in the blessing of existence—as though the Almighty Creator himself rejoiced with them, even when he himself is the only witness to their existence.

This single consideration is sufficient to convince us, that the “ almighty and everlasting God hateth “ nothing that he hath made.”

But we have surer grounds whereon to rest our faith in the love of God, than upon his works in nature and providence. It is upon his works of *grace*, that we build, as upon a *sure* foundation ; which neither the trials of life, nor the fears of death, can remove or weaken. If by supplying, with wonderful regularity, all things necessary for our temporal necessities, God give proof of his love to man—if the remedying, by countervailing blessings of fruitful showers and ripening suns, the evils of that primeval curse which the ground shared with fallen man, be also sufficient proof of his love to establish our faith,—how *unshaken* should be that faith, when we consider him as so loving the world,

that he gave his only Son to die for us ; in order to make us *capable of repentance*, and so to render us fit objects of his mercy and his love !

Assured then, that whoso, with sincere repentance, “ believeth in the Son of God, shall not perish, but “ have everlasting life <sup>1</sup>,”—we also assent to the second declaration of the Collect, that “ God does “ forgive the sins of all them that are penitent.” He “ forgiveth us, *not* for our *own* sake, but for *his*, who, “ having loved his own, loveth them to the end ;” who *died* to *prove* his love ; and who made it the condition of his death, that fallen man should be restored to God. We pray, therefore, that the Holy Spirit would “ create and make in us, new and contrite “ hearts,” in order, that, upon our repentance, we may be fit to receive pardon ; and *this* we shall be, when we give evidence of our sorrow for the past, by earnest endeavours to lead a holy life for the future. But to walk as penitents “ worthy of the “ vocation wherewith we are called <sup>2</sup> ;” “ worthy of “ the Lord <sup>3</sup> ;” “ worthy of our God <sup>4</sup> ;” requires the unceasing aid of the Spirit of God. No other power can make us sensible of the wretchedness of sin here, or give us faith to believe—and, by *repentance*, to *escape*—its punishment hereafter. That this prayer for divine assistance may bear the stamp of *sincerity*, let us not be wanting to ourselves, nor fail of exertion on our part. “ Let us turn unto the “ Lord our God,” for we *know* that “ he is gracious “ and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness,

<sup>1</sup> John iii. 16.

<sup>2</sup> Eph. iv. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Col. i. 10.

<sup>4</sup> 1 Thess. ii. 12.

“and repenteth him of the evil. Who knoweth if  
“he will return and repent and leave a blessing be-  
“hind him<sup>1</sup>!”

If thus we pray—if thus we act—if we add to our supplications before God, honest endeavours before men—if we earnestly strive to be, what we beseech God to make us, holy, and just, and good;—if we heartily wish to have new and contrite hearts—if we “lament our sins, and acknowledge our wretchedness *worthily* ;” then, He “who hateth  
“nothing that he hath made, and doth forgive the  
“sins of *all* them that are *penitent*,” will love and forgive *us*.—*Then* will he favourably receive our petitions; and, for his love and mercy’s sake, grant us perfect remission and forgiveness, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

<sup>1</sup> Joel ii. 13. Part of this chapter is appointed to be read as the Epistle for the day, in the Communion Service.

## 22. FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT.

*O LORD, who for our sake didst fast forty days and forty nights; give us grace to use such abstinence, that our flesh being subdued to the spirit, we may ever obey thy godly motions in righteousness and true holiness, to thy honour and glory; who livest and reignest with the Father and the Holy Ghost, one God, world without end. Amen.*

To understand the full sense of this prayer, we must bear in mind that portion of our Saviour's history, which records his Fast in the wilderness, and is appropriately chosen as the gospel for the day. The collect directs us to consider his Fast, as having been endured for *our sake*. This direction is well timed.

The season of Lent is a season of humiliation: and if any consideration might avail to humble us before God, it must surely be this—that so entirely are we by nature, unworthy in his sight, that his Son Jesus—holy, harmless, worthy to receive honour in heaven and earth—did endure, for forty days and forty nights, the severity of fasting, in order to begin the work of our salvation; and, by his own worthiness, compensate for our unworthiness. Besides, he is very properly said to have fasted, for *our sake*: because he so prepared himself for the temptation he endured for *us*.

The *time* chosen for his temptation is remarkable.



He was led up into the wilderness, immediately after he had been baptized as the *Blessed Son of God*: the very time when we might expect him to have been most free from liability to meet evil of any kind. But the Spirit of power and holiness, under whose guidance he was led, was given, not to *prevent* temptation, but to *deliver* him from the *evil* of it. So with ourselves—when we seriously enter upon a religious course, striving to walk as children of God—we must not expect our religion to prevent the approach of trials of our faith and patience:—its benefit is this; it enables us bear up against those trials; and, by grace, ultimately to overcome them.

The three temptations to which our blessed Lord was subject, are so striking, both as to the order in which they stand, and their close adaptation to the circumstances in which he was placed, that each claims a separate consideration.

The Son of God after long fasting was an hungry.

On this occasion, it had been vain to offer power or wealth in the wilderness: neither could have satisfied hunger. One loaf of bread to the hungry man, is better than thousands of gold, or the highest honour to which the ambitious might aspire. The tempter therefore suggests, that Jesus, if he be truly the Son of God, should “command the stones to be “made bread.” But no! this would have shewn distrust in the providence of God: and have argued a want of faith. The temptation, therefore, was resisted—as we must also resist our temptations—by the word of God; and by that faith, which we exercise in the spirit of adoption, whereby we call upon

God, as “Abba, Father!” and trust to his providence to bless our honest industry.

No sooner was it evident, that *faith* in God was *perfect* in its influence upon Jesus, than the tempter, with consummate skill, changed his mode of attack. He knew that every virtue is prone to pass into its corresponding vice—fear into despair,—faith into presumption. He thought therefore to lead this faithful Son of God one step too high; and thus change faith into presumption. “If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down from this pinnacle of the temple:” for, if thou *be* his Son, “he will give his angels charge concerning thee, that thou hurt not thy foot against a stone.” This temptation was also resisted. To have done the enemy’s bidding, would have tended neither to God’s honour, nor to the benefit of mankind:—consequently, the risk would have been not *faith*, but *presumption*. We may observe, that the devil does not attempt to cast our Saviour down; he cannot overthrow us, unless we be disposed to overthrow ourselves: the *temptation* to sin may be *his* act—but the *yielding* to it is *our own*.

Unwilling to fail in his purpose, the enemy next sought to dazzle the Prince of Peace, by a prospect of worldly grandeur; and offered all the kingdoms of *this* world, if he would worship him.

The offer was rejected with indignation—its conditions were both unlawful and unequal. It must ever be unlawful to be a slave to the world, even for all the glory that the world can give; and it is an unequal dealing, to offer even the whole *world*,

which *perisheth*, in exchange for a soul, which must *exist for ever*.

Thus, understanding how hard was the struggle maintained by the Son of God, against our spiritual enemy, and bearing in mind that he prepared himself for a successful issue of it by long fasting; we shall, with the greater sincerity, offer up the prayer of this collect—that God would give *us* also “grace “to use such abstinence,” as, by inducing unworldly thoughts, serious reflections, and holy resolutions, may prepare and arm us for a successful issue in *our* temptations—“that our flesh being subdued to the “spirit,” we may live in holy communion with our heavenly Father; obeying always such godly motions, as the Word and Spirit of Christ may suggest and impart to us, and “daily proceeding in all virtue “and godliness of living.” And we must always remember, that every inward conviction of what is wrong; every suggestion of what is right; every secret desire of the soul after holiness; every secret warning from unholiness; every good resolution which is consequent upon reading the word of Christ; every sentiment of piety which flows from meditating upon its excellences; every feeling of resignation to the Divine will, after imploring the influence of his Spirit—all these are to be considered as those “godly motions;” for obedience to which, this Collect teaches us to pray. Whatever measure of fasting we may prescribe to ourselves, let us take heed that it be observed in true holiness—not for mere form’s sake. Let it be a fast of the *spirit*—let us “rend “our *hearts*, and not our garments, and turn unto

“ the Lord our God.” Let our amended life and conduct tend to *his* honour and glory, by whose name we are called, by whose sacrifice we are redeemed, and by whose Spirit we are sanctified; and who, though once tempted like as we are, is now the glorious Lord of all; living and reigning ever, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, one God, world without end.

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### 23. SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT.

*ALMIGHTY GOD, who seest that we have no power of ourselves to help ourselves; keep us both outwardly in our bodies, and inwardly in our souls, that we may be defended from all adversities which may happen to the body, and from all evil thoughts which may assault and hurt the soul, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

OUR thoughts having been directed to the humility of the Messiah, in his fasting and temptation, we the more readily adopt the expression of lowliness with which this Collect opens. If the Son of God was led safely through his temptation, only in the strength of the Spirit—how much more requisite must be the same strength for *us* under *our* trials. Our wisdom is, neither to follow our own erring will, nor to “lean to our own understanding;” but to follow the example of our Saviour Christ, and “obey his godly motions in righteousness and true holiness; for surely Almighty God

“ doth see that we have no power of ourselves to “ help ourselves.” By thus candidly appealing to the Almighty, as “ seeing” our insufficiency, we virtually, both resign all confidence in our own strength, and declare an unreserved trust in his gracious favour through Jesus Christ. Whoso are armed with this trust are prepared against all Evil. Able to do nothing without aid—they yet struggle against the evil of their own hearts, and the temptations to which their spiritual foe may subject them—in the belief, that *He*, whose power is mercifully vouchsafed to those who pray for it, can do *all* things; and will exert that power on behalf of those, who, whilst they pray for its aid, are willing to yield to its influence.

This trust was the secret spring of that magnanimity of sentiment, and energy of action, which not less conspicuously than uniformly marked the conduct of St. Paul. Humility without debasement, and confidence without presumption, were so happily united in the Apostle’s character, that in proportion to his increase of *faith*, was his increased *vigilance*, with care “ to maintain *good works*.” On the one hand, was a deep conviction of his own insufficiency; on the other, a still deeper sense of the sufficiency of God. He was in the world—yet superior both to the love and fear of it. He “ fought a good fight;” he “ laboured more abundantly than “ all;” he had attained to so high eminence of excellency, that to him “ to live was Christ, and to “ die was gain:” yet with a truly Christian elevation of sentiment, he gave to God the *praise*—“ not *I*, “ but the grace of God which was with me.”



Let us not forget, that the record of St. Paul's holy faith, and holy practice, is left for our example.

Lest, however, this doctrine of spiritual dependance upon God, should prove a stone of stumbling and rock of offence, the petitions which follow, both explain and guard it against misconstruction. —They remind us, that we depend upon God for all things necessary for the *body* also : and thus easily lead us to meditate upon a truth, which we do not for a moment doubt, in order that we may the more readily be led to acknowledge another truth, which, though it rests upon equally incontrovertible evidence, is not always acknowledged with the same unreservedness.

Every Christian believes, that so entirely do we live, and move, and have our being in God—so universal is his superintending providence—that without his knowledge “not a sparrow falleth to the ground”—that by *Him* “the very hairs of our head are all numbered”—that having made all things, he directs, and controuls them—and that *he* alone is to be relied upon as our defender from all adversities which may happen to the body.

Now if this supreme power be required to defend a mortal *body* from adversities which are *transitory* ; no other power can defend an immortal *soul* against adversities whose consequences are *eternal*. If supreme power be the only defence against the lesser ill, no inferior power can defend us against the greater. Therefore Almighty God—to whom in this Collect we pray—can alone be to our *souls* a defence and a shield, so that we may not greatly fall.

Faith, however, though thus exercised in an un-



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ceasing reliance upon the Almighty for protection, is not to make us careless in our conduct. How do we act with respect to the body? food and clothing are from the Lord; who, for our sake, maketh the pleasant plants to grow, and blesseth the increase of our cattle—we nevertheless till the ground, and tend our flocks, with as much care, as if success depended solely upon our industry and care. So also we seek competence to ward off poverty, and are properly regardful of an honest fame; knowing at the same time, that “riches and honour come, O God, of thee<sup>1</sup>.” In short, at the very time we pray of God that he would “defend us from all adversities which “may happen to the body,” we take every precaution on our own part to ward them off. Exactly thus it is with the *Soul*: its powers were given and are preserved by God: in *Him* it lives, and moves, and has its being. Yet we strive to support its powers, by a proper use of the means thereto provided, viz. his Word and Spirit. To gain needful help we fly to our heavenly Father in prayer, and are as earnest in our petitions, as if the words we utter, could of themselves bring down an answer and a blessing; though we are all along fully aware, that *his grace* gives to our souls, not only the *power* to pray, but the *Will*. Thus it is, that though the Almighty Father has been pleased to give us his Word and Spirit, as the means whereby we can work the work of our own salvation—he yet chooses that all our works should begin, continue, and end in *Him*; that to *Him* we should look, with a direct

<sup>1</sup> 1 Chron. xxix. 12.

appeal to his power and mercy ; that we should confess, as well as feel ourselves altogether dependent upon him. But whilst he commands this reference to him, the command is made, not to the exclusion of our own exertions.

When the soul is endangered by temptation, act as you would in any sudden danger which might threaten the body. Is life unexpectedly assailed ? how instantly do you put forth unusual exertion ! you strain every nerve—by flight, by resistance, by stratagem : though speed, strength, and wisdom—nay, though the very power to move a limb—be of God. Be as wise for your soul's sake ! in the hour of temptation, fly if you can ; if not, resist as you may ; “ resist the devil, and he will flee from you <sup>1</sup>.” Strive manfully, as though success depended entirely upon yourself ; at the same time, be animated by the consideration, that God fighteth for you : and remember, that “ greater is he who is with you, “ than he who is against you,” and that no man is “ tempted above that he is able <sup>2</sup>.”

The more decidedly you combine exertion with faith, trusting to God for success ; the stronger ground will you have to hope, that the comprehensive prayer of this Collect may be answered—that Almighty God will defend you “ from all adversities “ which may happen to the body, and from all evil “ thoughts which may assault and hurt the soul ; “ through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

<sup>1</sup> James iv. 7.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. x. 13.

## 24. THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT.

*WE beseech thee, Almighty God, look upon the hearty desires of thy humble servants; and stretch forth the right hand of thy majesty, to be our defence against all our enemies, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

THE terms in which this truly Christian address is framed, point out, in a very forcible manner, the necessity of perfect sincerity, when we draw nigh to God, and pour out our supplications before him: they at once remind us, how closely united are our duty and our interest; exciting us to reflect, that the hope of gaining the defence we pray for, is either a reasonable or an unreasonable hope, as sincerity or insincerity accompany our prayers. The declaration, that our desires after divine blessings are from the *heart*, shews us of what nature they *ought* to be—such as our consciences can approve—such as we can present to Almighty God, who knowest the secrets of all hearts—such as are agreeable to his holy will and pleasure. If the case were otherwise, how should we dare so steadily to beseech the Almighty to “look upon them?” “He is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity.” This Collect, therefore, at the very opening, is calculated to compel a serious self-examination—a scrutinising search into our own hearts—warning us that our desires really be, what we profess them to be—both holy

and sincere. For if we pray either with *no* meaning, or *little* meaning—either with entire *indifference*, or with *partial* attention,—in these cases, we *ourselves* render ineffectual our own petitions. Hence in proportion to the degree of confidence, in which the address is conceived, should be our care to avoid rashness in offering it. Indeed this boldness of style is well tempered by the lowly term, under which, as supplicants, we designate ourselves:—even as “humble servants.” What, though we present our hearty desires to the searching eye of Almighty God! in proportion to the greatness of the privilege should be the measure of humility with which it is exercised. Ours is *no merited* claim! it is an *undeserved grant*! a gracious favour. Access to the throne of grace is given by the Father to the Son, and by the Son to whomsoever he will; even to those who are united to God through him. It is our *union* with *him*, which passes us to the throne of grace. Of whatever nature be our petitions there—whether of prayer for pardon, or of thanksgiving for mercies—*none* are accepted, *except* through *him*: *none* found worthy, *except* as they be found in *him*: *none* bear the scrutiny, *except* those, which *he* has mercifully rendered *righteous*, by making them *his own*.

If then, when presenting our desires to the scrutiny of a heart-searching God, we would adopt the style of address with which this Collect opens; faith in the Intercessor, not confidence in ourselves, must support us. Thus supported, we proceed with our petition, and beseech the Almighty, “to stretch  
“forth the right hand of his Majesty to be our defence



“against all our enemies.” The expression is figurative, and of very frequent occurrence in the Holy Scriptures: particularly in the Book of Psalms. It signifies a favourable exercise of Divine Power. Looking therefore upon our heavenly Father as King of kings, and Lord of lords, we beseech him, in the exercise of his omnipotence, to be our defence against *all* our enemies; against enemies, both temporal and spiritual. For if we have enemies,—who, by injustice, by oppression, by slander, by falsehood, by backbiting, or by wrong—break in upon our quiet, and injure us in our worldly estate; so we have enemies of the soul; who, by the exercise of the deepest cunning, and most cruel malevolence, strive to undermine our peace, by tempting us to dishonour God—to live heedless of his presence, thoughtless of the fear of death, forgetful of the day of judgment, and awfully indifferent to the strict and solemn account, we must one day give before the great tribunal. *These* enemies are the *Devil* and his *Angels*. St. Paul speaks of them as principalities, as powers, as the rulers of the darkness<sup>1</sup> of this world.

But of all enemies, O God, save us from *ourselves*.

In vain would the devil attempt, either to enslave us to the world by the allurements of pleasure, or to induce us to murmur against God in the season of distress and misery; unless his evil suggestions were too welcome to us, and too frequently found in our

<sup>1</sup> By darkness is meant wickedness—refer to the Collect for the first Sunday in Advent.

hearts a ready approval. The tempter accurately observes our infirmities, and frames his temptations accordingly <sup>1</sup>. Are we rich? He tempts us to be puffed up with self-importance, to be vain glorious, and to have so little care for any thing, but the pomp, and riches, and the pride of life, that we gradually forget the Giver in the gift, forsake our God, and become slaves to the world. Are we poor?—He then suggests to us, that we are not well dealt with; he would fain make us to doubt the justice and good providence of God; he encourages us in our fatal self-love; and strives to make us “think” more highly of ourselves than we ought to think,” in order to lead us to the sin of murmuring against the dispensations of our heavenly Father <sup>2</sup>. Indeed, in whatever circumstances we may be placed, he presents to us that temptation, which he thinks will most easily prevail against us.

Thus surrounded by spiritual dangers, and ever open to the attacks of our spiritual foes—*ourselves* the foe *most* to be dreaded—conscious too, not only of our weakness in resisting evil, but of our natural proneness to encourage it; we humble ourselves under a sense of unworthiness in the sight of a perfect God. But remembering our high privilege as *Christians*—though aware of the immeasurable distance between him who dwelleth on high, and us—his creatures here below—we do not draw back; we rather draw nigh, through *Him*, by whose name we are called: and as reconciled children of God *in*

<sup>1</sup> See the comment on the Collect for the first Sunday in Lent.

<sup>2</sup> See the comment upon the Collect for the fourth Sunday in Lent.

*Jesus Christ*, beseech him to save us by the right hand of his power, and defend us from all our enemies. Neither will our desires, if offered from the heart, be vain. Our confidence in prayer to heaven, rests, where it *ought* to rest, solely upon the merits and worthiness of Christ. It is for *his* sake that the Lord is nigh unto all such as call upon him faithfully. It is for *his* sake, that the Lord of heaven heareth the cry of them who fear him;—heareth and saveth them. It is *He*, who unites earth to heaven, man to his Maker, the penitent to his God. Let us then, as the Epistle for the day appropriately exhorts us—“have no fellowship with the unfruitful “works of darkness,” but, “walk as children of “light, in all goodness and righteousness and “truth;” that no longer fearing to present the desire of our hearts to Almighty God—we may find him, as David found him, to be “a Sun and a Shield<sup>1</sup>,” a *solace* under all our sorrowing; a *defence* against all our enemies: through the same his Son Jesus Christ our Lord:—“who is gone into heaven, and “is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him<sup>2</sup>.”

<sup>1</sup> Psalm lxxxiv. 11.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Peter iii. 22.

## 25. FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT.

*GRANT, we beseech thee, Almighty God, that we, who for our evil deeds do worthily deserve to be punished, by the comfort of thy grace may mercifully be relieved, through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.*

THE confession, "that we for our evil deeds do "worthily deserve to be punished," is very seasonably *here* introduced. Our Church supposes, that her sons, being now arrived at the mid season of Lent<sup>1</sup>, have so wisely applied themselves to that serious meditation which the occasion demands, that they see and feel, more and more, their own unworthiness in the sight of God. Nor can we rise from the self-examination, already recommended as appropriate to this season<sup>2</sup>, without a deep conviction, that Infinite Wisdom could alone contrive, and Infinite Mercy alone accept, any propitiation for our sins and unworthiness. Instead of wondering that we experience a succession of troubles and vexations, which, wave upon wave, come over us<sup>3</sup>; we shall rather be amazed at that forbearance, which delays to strike, though we deserve punishment; and humbly rejoice in that long suffering, which "willeth

<sup>1</sup> Mid Lent Sunday.

<sup>2</sup> See the comment on the preceding Collect.

<sup>3</sup> "All thy waves are gone over me." Psalm xlii. 7.

“ not the death of a sinner, but rather that he should  
“ turn and live.”

This declaration of self-abasement is, in fact, none other, than the members of our Church do daily offer. At the opening of his service, the worshipper confesses that he hath “ offended against “ God’s holy laws,” for he hath “ done those things “ which he ought not to have done, and left undone “ those things which he ought to have done;” that in him there is *no* spiritual *health*: even the whole congregation, throughout the first part of the Litany, repeat after every petition, the humiliating truth, that in the sight of a holy God, they are all “ miser-  
“ able sinners.”

Grounded upon this conviction of our *natural* sinfulness, and consequently just liability to the wrath<sup>1</sup> of the Almighty, is our unreserved confession that “ we most righteously have deserved” even “ those “ evils,” which we beseech him, “ for the glory of his “ name to turn from us <sup>2</sup>.”

If these convictions need strengthening, we may fortify them by considering what our feelings are upon looking back to past offences. When the fancied sweets of vice have turned to bitterness—when the veil, which passion interposed, is removed, and vice stands exposed in its native deformity—when we call to mind the misery of a sinful course, and can judge our past actions, *unprejudiced* by *present* feeling—*then* we condemn *ourselves*, and

<sup>1</sup> See the Church Catechism “ By nature born in sin and children “ of *wrath*.”

<sup>2</sup> See the prayer at the close of the Litany.



allow the full force of St. Paul's animated appeal to the conscience; "what fruit had ye then in those " things whereof ye are now ashamed?"

Now, if to ourselves sin is so hateful, that we cannot, without shame, remember the occasions on which we yielded ourselves slaves to it—if, in the season of calm reflection, not only sins *committed*, but duties *omitted*, rise up in array against us, and condemn us at the bar even of our *own* judgment—we may well confess, that "we, for our evil deeds, " do worthily deserve to be punished," at the hand of a just and holy God.

When therefore evil overtakes us, let it not be—as when it overtakes the *wicked* man—to *overthrow* us<sup>1</sup>! Let it overtake *us*, for our *good*. Let us, in every afflictive dispensation of Providence, acknowledge the merciful design of our heavenly Father: "it is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good." He corrects us in order to turn us from our offences. Let us not proudly think that he deals out to us a hard measure: let us rather examine well our hearts; we perhaps shall find lurking there, some secret sin, which even to our own consciences, makes us justly the objects of our Father's wrath. His heavy hand is upon us, that we may feel—ere it be too late to feel—"that the wages of sin is death:" death to our peace—death to our hopes—death eternal.

We should therefore learn to see in all our afflictions, both *Judgment* and *Mercy*; *Judgment*—as they are the just punishment of our evil deeds: *Mercy*—as they have a natural tendency to correct

<sup>1</sup> Psalm cxl. 11.

our faults, and turn us from a careless to a religious course of life <sup>1</sup>. *Then*, we may hope for an answer of peace to the prayer of this Collect; and, “by the “comfort of God’s grace, be mercifully relieved,” as well from the *power* of evil upon our hearts, as from the fear of *punishment* due to it. For, the same sacred oracles, which most awfully warn the self-righteous, as decidedly encourage the penitent, and assure the fainting spirit of the lowly. The self-righteous man is warned that “*all* are included “under sin”—that “whoso offendeth in one point, “is guilty of all.” That “if we say we have no sin, “we deceive ourselves”—that “there is none other “name under heaven given among men, whereby “we must be saved.” To the penitent and lowly, *thus* saith the Lord, “though your sins be as scarlet, “they shall be as white as snow; though they be “red like crimson, they shall be as wool <sup>2</sup>.” Although “if we say that we have no sin, we deceive “ourselves, and the truth is not in us”—yet, “if we “confess our sins God is *faithful* and *just* to forgive “us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”—Sweeter consolation—richer comfort than *this*—the heart of man cannot conceive. But this relief is to be received as a *gracious gift*, through the intercession of our Redeemer; and is bestowed by the Holy Ghost, the Comforter. *He* strengthens our faith in the atonement made by Jesus Christ: *He* enables us to repent of our sins, lament our un-

<sup>1</sup> “Before I was afflicted I went astray, but *now* have I kept thy “word.” Psalm cxix. 67.

<sup>2</sup> Isaiah i. 18.

worthiness, and strive, not only to escape the punishment of evil deeds, by avoiding the commission of them; but also to gain the love and favour of our heavenly Father, by “hereafter living a godly, righteous, and sober life”—to our peace of mind in this world, and to our everlasting joy in the next: through the same Jesus Christ, our Mediator and Redeemer.

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## 26. FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT.

*WE beseech thee, Almighty God, mercifully to look upon thy people; that by thy great goodness they may be governed and preserved evermore, both in body and soul, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

THIS prayer bears a very near resemblance to the Collect for the second Sunday in Lent. We there implored Almighty God to “keep us both outwardly in our bodies, and inwardly in our souls.” Here we beseech him “mercifully to look upon his people,” that “by his great goodness they may be governed and preserved evermore both in body and soul.” Notwithstanding however the apparent similarity in the two Collects, there is in this, an allusion to the situation in which we stand towards God—as a people toward their King and Governor—which gives it peculiar force; and opens to us a field for much instructive and comforting meditation.

The allusion may *instruct* us as to the *nature* of our duty, and *comfort* us in the *performance* of it.

It is allowed upon the plainest principles of common sense and good faith, that a people are bound to submit themselves to laws, by whose operation upon society at large, they expect to owe their own safety. Upon the same principles we are bound to be governed by those *heavenly* laws, by whose influence alone it is, that not only the evil of our own hearts, but all “those evils which the fraud and  
“malice of the devil, or man worketh against us, can  
“be brought to nought, and by God’s merciful providence dispersed.”

This obligation gains additional force, by that *new* relation which exists between God and his people, through Jesus Christ. The Almighty is our king and governor, not only as he “ruleth in the  
“kingdom of men, unto the ends of the earth,” and giveth “it to whomsoever he will<sup>1</sup> ;” but, as he is supreme Lord of that spiritual kingdom, of which at baptism we were enrolled the subjects. And to what point of obedience was our engagement then restricted? Did our sponsors, at the baptismal font, make reservation? Did we ourselves, when ratifying our vows at confirmation, reserve some secret sin, as the point whereon we would refuse to be governed by the laws of our heavenly king? Were we not rather bound to *all* obedience; even to death? The terms of the bond were *without* restriction; and we have not only ratified it at *confirmation*, but do strengthen its hold, as often as we renew our oath

<sup>1</sup> Daniel iv. 25.

of allegiance, at the holy sacrament<sup>1</sup>. We consequently stand self-devoted to the whole service of our Christian soldiership—a service of toil, and danger, and watchfulness—even to our lives' end<sup>2</sup>. Hence the apostle's animated exhortation; “watch ye—stand fast in the faith—quit you like men! be strong<sup>3</sup>!” Strong in *Him*, whose “Strength is perfected in weakness,” and whose animating example, in fighting the good fight of faith, would lead us to the highest victory, a victory over sin—the world, the flesh, and the devil,—even a victory over ourselves. “This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our Faith<sup>4</sup>.”

If we be faithful soldiers and servants of our heavenly King, we may without presumption hope, that he will be “our defender and keeper against

<sup>1</sup> The word *sacrament*, is derived from the Latin “*sacramentum* :” which means “a voluntary oath taken by soldiers:” we find one of the Roman writers (Juvenal) using the term “*sacramenta*,” to express even “the whole of military service.” Let us remember then, that by taking the sacrament, we most solemnly *pledge ourselves* to fidelity, to watchfulness, to endurance, to patience—in short, to all those duties which become men, fighting against sin under the banner of Christ—and the performance of which is evidenced by “leading a godly, righteous and sober life:” and let this service be both entered upon and performed with a willing heart and a ready mind.

<sup>2</sup> What parent, as he brings his children to baptism, can read the affecting prayer of dedication, without experiencing deep and contending emotions of apprehension and confidence; he dreads to contemplate the various trials to which his children may be called, amid the difficulties of their warfare: but he is cheered by the comfortable hope, that Jesus Christ, the great Captain under whose banne they are enrolled, will be himself a sword and a shield, and bear them safe through danger.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Cor. xvi. 13.

<sup>4</sup> 1 John v. 4.



“all our enemies.” In the consciousness of a willing obedience, we shall find the best security for our preservation: “whoso walketh *uprightly*, walketh *surely*: he shall be saved<sup>1</sup>.” Walking with God, and abiding under the shadow of His wing, we shall be shielded from all harm. “The Lord is our Lawgiver, the Lord is our king: he will save us<sup>2</sup>.”

It is true, that in yielding to the governance of the divine laws, we shall meet with difficulties. We must exercise self-denial—self-control—patience under provocation—resignation under suffering. There is required a perfect sacrifice of self—with a devotion of heart and soul to the fulfilment of our whole duty towards God and our neighbour. These were St. Paul’s difficulties; but he esteemed them all, as comparatively nothing, when compared to the recompence of reward. The one, eternal; the other, transitory. He terms his afflictions *light*, because they were “for a *moment*”—for the short space of this mortal life. The reward held out overbalanced them; for the weight of promised *glory* was *eternal* in the heavens. Well then may we in our Liturgy speak of God’s service—as “a service of perfect freedom.” Freedom it *is*, to the *faithful* subjects of his kingdom: for it frees them from the harder service of sin; from the corrupt and unsparing dominion of the world; and the galling fetters of their own Will. Happy are we, so long as we can rejoice in this service, and obey the laws of the kingdom—in thought, word, and deed. The power of our King, will not be our dread, but the bond of our

<sup>1</sup> Prov. x. 9.—xxviii. 18.

<sup>2</sup> Isaiah xxxiii. 22.

security. Whilst it claims our obedience, it is at hand for our safety. The same laws, by which *we* are governed, keep in subjection the *powers of darkness* also—check their wicked counsels—and defeat their evil designs against us.

Thus in our *obedience* we find our *preservation*.

Pray we therefore heartily—and strive we sincerely—to be *governed* by Almighty God: *then* shall we not pray in vain to be *preserved* by him. For as thine, O God, is the spiritual kingdom, of which we pray to be faithful subjects: so thine is the power, to preserve us in our faithfulness; even till that great day, when thy Name shall be exalted in glory as in righteousness, and thy Kingdom rule over All!



## 27. SUNDAY BEFORE EASTER.

*ALMIGHTY and everlasting God, who of thy tender love towards mankind, hast sent thy Son our Saviour Jesus Christ, to take upon him our flesh and to suffer death upon the cross, that all mankind should follow the example of his great humility; mercifully grant, that we may both follow the example of his patience, and also be made partakers of his resurrection, through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

THIS Sunday is generally called *Palm Sunday*: because the multitude, who met our blessed Saviour

upon his entrance into Jerusalem, strewed branches of palm trees in the way. It is sometimes however called, more properly, *Passion Sunday*: because it is the entrance upon a week, which in memory of the death and passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, is known by the title of *Passion Week*. With a view to encourage all due seriousness of thought at so solemn a season, the appointed Collect for this day is wisely so framed, as to bring before us under one view, the life, death, and resurrection of the Son of God: and to lead us, from a consideration of his *incarnation*, and *death*, and *triumph*, to a comprehensive prayer, that “we may follow the example of “his humility and patience, and also be made partakers of his resurrection.”

Of the *three* subjects thus presented to our notice, the *first* has been already considered<sup>1</sup>.

The *second* and *third* will require our attention on Good-Friday, and Easter-day: those days being expressly set apart to commemorate our Lord's death, and resurrection<sup>2</sup>.

We will *now* therefore consider, how by a proper observance of this season of sorrow, we may duly prepare ourselves to commemorate his *death* with *humility*, and celebrate his *resurrection* with holy *joy*.

This is to be done by fasting and prayer; in token that we are sincere followers of the cross of Christ, and anxious to shew our sincerity, by com-

<sup>1</sup> See the Collect for Christmas-Day.

<sup>2</sup> See the Collects for Good-Friday and Easter-Day.

memorating his death with unwonted seriousness of heart, and all holy reverence<sup>1</sup>.

Nor is this reverential regard enjoined upon slight grounds. The injunction is truly apostolic. Indeed not only this week, but the whole of Lent was observed in the churches of the apostles, by especial strictness in religious duties. The providence of God has preserved to us a most satisfactory record on this point. In the works of Irenæus, one of the earliest Christian writers, we have valuable testimony that Saint John regularly kept the fast of this holy season. That writer informs us, that Anicetus found it impossible to persuade an eminent disciple of Saint John, to omit the solemn observance of Lent, because he had been in the habit of observing it with the evangelist himself and the rest of the apostles<sup>2</sup>! Hence our Church now calls her sons to a deeper repentance; with a restrained pursuit of those amusements and pleasures, which, though in themselves allowable, may, if not occasionally restrained, weaken the soul for severer duties. She claims our *heart-felt* service; and, anxious to rekindle a holy zeal in the service of our Christ, leads us to the very "horns of the altar"

<sup>1</sup> See observations upon the services of Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday, in Passion week.

<sup>2</sup> The name of the disciple was Polycarp; who had been ordained bishop of Smyrna by Saint John himself. The account of his regularity in keeping the fast of the Passion, is recorded by Irenæus; who had both heard and seen him; and who particularly mentions the unsuccessful endeavour of Anicetus to persuade him not to keep the Lent fast.

Anicetus was bishop of Rome for eleven years, and died A.D. 161.

Irenæus was the successor of Pothinus, as bishop of Lyons.

—shews us the Lamb of God, there bound, and points out his patient bearing under every Ill—till our hearts being subdued at viewing in *Him*, the victim of *our* sins; we turn in sorrow from the scene—turn even to the Lord our God in weeping, fasting, and prayer.

True it is, that our Church does *not* require a literal fast during the forty days of Lent, or even during all the days of Passion week. She confines the outward fast to Ash-Wednesday, and Good-Friday—the *first* and the *last* of the forty days—when her sons forbear to partake of their accustomed food, until with one accord they have publicly made their supplications before God, in all humility and self-abasement; mourning their sins, sorrowing for their offences, negligences, and ignorances, and testifying at once their sorrow and their repentance: thus giving before men, the plainest *outward* evidence they can give, of hearty repentance towards God.

Fasting, however, in a *spiritual* sense, though always the Christian's duty, is expected to mark his conduct most *conspicuously* during the whole season of Lent; that God may see in *him*, as in the mourning Ninevites, not only fasting, but good works. *They* returned *every* one from his evil ways, and God saw their *works*—the fruit of their repentance—that they were *good*; and God did spare Nineveh<sup>1</sup>.

In regulating this fast, let Scripture be our guide.

“Be not of a sad countenance,” but “anoint thy head, and wash thy face.” Let severity of inward

<sup>1</sup> Jonah iii. 10.



feeling be kept under due control, and your appearance be marked with the calm cheerfulness of unaffected piety; "that ye may appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father, which is in secret." But a holy *fast* is, in fact, a holy *joy*: for it is to live near to God; to walk with God; and to have our conversation in heaven!

Nor can you ever want occasion whereon to exercise self-denial, in proof that you fast unto the Lord. Seest thou the indigent? Give him of thy goods—though it be to thine own hindrance! seest thou thine enemy? curb the rising anger of thy soul—change thy purpose of enmity, and turn unto him in kindness! dost thou meet a friend more prosperous than thyself? envy him not—rather rejoice with him! doth thine eye rest upon the earth? think how soon thou wilt be consigned to kindred dust! is it upward turned, to the "glorious firmament on high?" let faith carry thee still higher; even to that heaven, from which at the final trumpet-call, "the Lord shall descend with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God," and call thee to judgment.

Amid such reflections—prepare thy soul to meet him.

Whoso *thus* fasteth—emulating holy men of old in compunction, and pious resolutions; with a subdued spirit, a humble heart, and earnest prayer for grace to amend his life according to God's holy word—he will be blessed in his deed. Upon such afflictions of the soul<sup>1</sup>, God will look graciously; such

<sup>1</sup> Lev. xxiii. 29. where fasting is expressed by "afflicting the soul."

sorrows he will pity; sins so repented of, he will forgive. The trumpet in Zion, proclaiming our annual fast, will not be blown in vain. The *holy* week will be a *happy* week. Performing our duties in the world, yet rising superior to its influence; our communion will be with God: we shall do all to *his* glory: and our *heart* will be, where our *treasure* is—in *heaven*; hid with Christ in God. We shall hail the spring fast—as “the spiritual spring of the “soul” when vices in the heart, like the husks of the buried seed in the ground, do die: and virtues, like pleasant flowers, do spring up and put forth buds; do blossom, and bear fruit: even fruit unto holiness—the end whereof is life, and joy, and glory for ever<sup>1</sup>.

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## MONDAY BEFORE EASTER.

HAVING entered upon the great and holy week, we are directed by our church to observe each day in it with due solemnity. Careful provision is made for such observance. The Collect indeed of *Sunday* is used successively on *this* and the *three* following days; but each day has *its own* Epistle and Gospel. Thus a holy fervour is kept alive in our hearts—the

<sup>1</sup> Chrysostom, equally elegant and eloquent, thus speaks of the Lent fast. I have paraphrased the passage. In the original, it is inimitably sweet. Should the scholar condescend to open these pages, he will allow me to refer him to Chrysostom's Works—fifth Volume—on the subject of the Lent fast: also to his second homily upon the fast.

altar loses not its fire—the flame gradually kindles into a brighter glow, as we approach nearer to that solemn hour, wherein we commemorate the glorious sacrifice of the eternal Son of God.

The passage of Isaiah, which opens the Epistle<sup>1</sup>, is conceived in the full grandeur of divine inspiration, and expressed in the loftiest style of eastern poetry. The sublimity of the prophet's style, and the dignity of his subject, unite in arresting our attention, and reviving every dormant spark of pious feeling.

The Son of God is represented, in figurative language, as returning from the slaughter of his enemies at Bozrah<sup>2</sup>; where he had achieved a final conquest for his people: “the year of their redemption was come.” The conqueror appears in the gorgeous harness of battle: the splendour of his armour, though worn throughout the combat, is yet unobscured.—It is of heavenly temper; no spiritual enemy can injure, no mortal foe deface it. He is glorious in his apparel, though his garment be dyed with the blood of Edom<sup>3</sup>, and “red like one that treadeth the wine press.”

By this apposite comparison, we are directed to picture to ourselves a husbandman; who presses—

<sup>1</sup> The portion of Scripture read for the Epistle, is generally taken (as its title imports) from the Epistles in the New Testament.

But as the *object* of its introduction is to *prepare* for the *Gospel* of the day—*any* part of Scripture (New or Old) may be used for the Epistle, if it be a *suitable* introduction to the Gospel.

<sup>2</sup> Bozrah—the chief city of Edom.

<sup>3</sup> Edom—or Idumæa—part of Arabia—so called from Edom, which was one of the names of Esau, son of Isaac.

*alone*—the produce of his vintage—none to aid—none to relieve—none to comfort: he still labours unwearied in the wine vat, till every cluster be trodden down, bruised, and broken. Thus he, who cometh from Edom, “travelling in the greatness of “his strength,” the Lord of the *spiritual* vineyard—*He* hath trodden down his enemies; in his fury he hath trampled them under his feet: by death hath conquered death, the last enemy; and by his return from the dead, hath *established* his victory.

The Saviour then hath trodden in the wine press, till *all* enemies are subdued unto him. But why had he *none* to *help* him? why laboured he with wonder, and amazement, and desolation, and in vain expectation of an helper? why “trod he the wine “press *alone*?”

The Gospel unfolds to us the mystery.

He bare *our sins*. None would succour him under the weight and scorn of such a burden. *His* enemies and *ours*—the devil and his angels—attack, harass, and perplex his soul—his adversaries scorn and mock him—his friends forsake him and flee—his Father’s wrath is heavy upon him—God forsakes the Son of his love; because *that* Son doth *not* forsake *us*<sup>1</sup>. What a debt of gratitude owe we to such

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xxvii. 46. “My God! My God! why hast *thou* forsaken “me?” Such was the plaintive appeal of the dying Saviour.

He was not surprised that the *world* had forsaken him—“For “me,” saith he, “it hateth.” Even when his *disciples* forsook him and fled, he did but pity their infirmity; for he knew that the spirit was willing, though the flesh was weak. This circumstance too he had foreseen; and supported himself with the consoling expectation that his Father’s gracious presence would *then* strengthen and comfort him. (John xvi. 32.) “Beloved,” saith he to his disciples,

a Saviour; who for our sakes, voluntarily and alone, “trod the wine press of the fierceness and wrath of “Almighty God<sup>1</sup>!” and “poured out his soul unto “death<sup>2</sup>.” No terror, no dismay, no desolateness, could move him from his purpose. “Having loved “his own, he loved them to the end.” The contest was severe, but the prize was glorious. The year of his redeemed was come. He *would* be their Redeemer. For *them* he chose to be afflicted<sup>3</sup>. For *them* he fought against principalities and powers, and the rulers of the darkness of this world. *Alone* he fought—*alone* he conquered. Now if *his* were the toil, *his* the victory—to *Him* alone be the praise

“the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that *ye* shall leave me alone:” “and yet I am not alone, *because the Father is with me.*” When therefore his Father also forsook him, he appealed, in the consciousness of innocence, to the love and the faithfulness of God; “My God! my God! *why* hast *thou* forsaken me?—*thou* who didst “declare me thy beloved son, in whom thou wert well pleased—“*thou*, at whose hands I received and drank the bitter cup assigned “me—*thou*, whose glories I have exalted—*thou*, whose Will I have “obeyed in life, and am now obeying unto death—why, in this my “hour of suffering, *why* hast *thou* forsaken me?”

It was this scene which the prophetic eye of David saw opened to him, as he mourned the heavy sorrow of a soul forsaken of its God. (Psalm lxix. 21.) “*Thy* rebuke hath broken my heart; I am full “of heaviness: I looked for some to have pity on me, but there was “no man; *neither* found I *any* to comfort me.”

Ingratitude to an *earthly* benefactor justly stamps the ungrateful with universal reprobation. And shall we, think you, stand excused for ingratitude to a *heavenly* benefactor! “Judge yourselves, brethren, “that ye be not judged of the Lord;” and if ye really love the Saviour, who endured all these agonies for you—“Keep his com- “mandments.”

<sup>1</sup> Isaiah lxiii. 3, 6.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. liii. 12.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. lxiii. 9. The Epistle for the day.



and honour. Let us *obey* Him, who so gloriously *won* our obedience. Let us devote ourselves to his service, and especially now be ready to withdraw our thoughts awhile from the world and its perplexities—and give to *His* honour this short season of sorrow—for he gave his whole life for us. Let us acknowledge, that upon *Him* alone can rest our hope of life eternal; for none other name under heaven is “given to man whereby we must be saved”<sup>1</sup>—and with this acknowledgment, let us draw near unto him in faith, and address him in the beautiful language of the prophet, “Thou therefore, O Lord, art “our Father, our Redeemer; thy name is from ever—“lasting”<sup>2</sup>.” Amen.

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## TUESDAY BEFORE EASTER.

OUR attention having been directed to the splendour with which the conqueror of Edom returned from his victory, we are now led back to the conflict itself; and to the nature of its labours. No mention is here made of glorious apparel; no trampling under foot of enemies—no denunciation of vengeance—no avowal of conscious dignity—no declaration of unchecked power. The *scene* is *changed*. In proportion to the dazzling splendour and high bearing of the conqueror, is the lowly demeanour of the toiling warrior: for in spiritual warfare, *He* stands fairest for the victory, who endures most patiently.

<sup>1</sup> Acts. iv. 12.

<sup>2</sup> Isaiah lxiii. 16.

In such a contest, success depends not upon the more dazzling qualities which mark human character and human actions, but upon those *passive* graces of the soul; which have less of earth in them than heaven—gifts of the Spirit of God. These graces are submission and resignation; as they are grounded upon faith.

If we unrepiningly *submit* to the various ills of life, by which our foes—the ministers of evil—are permitted to try our fidelity as Christian soldiers; we *conquer by submission*: for the aim of our enemies is defeated. They, by their attacks, would drive us from God; we draw but still *nearer* to HIM.

If to this submission we add *resignation*—enduring *cheerfully* a *continuance* of trial—we are more than conquerors: for not only are our enemies defeated, and we ourselves unharmed, clad “in the whole armour of God;” but we have hope to gain the crown of righteousness.

The ground of this submission and resignation is *faith*.

We turn not back upon the approach of the severest trials of our fidelity, but submit without hesitation, because *faith* carries our view to another and a better world; where the victorious soldier of the cross is promised a crown of victory, whose glory fadeth not. And if troubles increase upon us, we resign ourselves cheerfully to God’s will. Neither the languor of sickness, nor the loss of fortune, of fame, or of friends can make us murmur. By *faith* we commit ourselves to God. In him we find a friend in every time of need—a Father of the fatherless; a God of the widow; the helper of all that flee

to him for succour; the life of them that believe; the resurrection of the dead; and the *sure* though *future* “rewarder of all those who diligently seek “him<sup>1</sup>.”

Even the great Captain of our salvation “opened “his ear” to receive the commands of Him, in whose service he was enrolled. He “was not rebellious,” but submitted to whatever it might please God to lay upon him. “Neither turned he away back.” The ingratitude of his own countrymen; the infidelity of the more enlightened part of mankind; the prejudices and sins of the world at large—these and all the powers of darkness were arrayed against him; yet he met the hard trial of his fidelity with the most perfect submission. The object of his enemies was thereby defeated, their power brought low, and himself exalted with honour. As the modes of

<sup>1</sup> Heb. xi. 6. and Job xix. 25. It was this spirit of unbending faith which supported the patient Job. He lost, successively, fortune, friends, health, and fame. He became a mark for the finger of scorn, and the tongue of calumny—“Where is *now* thy God?” But the soul of the Patriarch still rose above poverty and contempt and misery. Undaunted, he trusted in God. “Though he slay me, yet “will I trust in him.” “I know that my Redeemer liveth; and “though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh “shall I see God.”

Let the same sure prospect of a *future* and *eternal* recompense to every patient follower of the meek and lowly and suffering Jesus, animate the afflicted Christian “to lift up the hands that hang down “and the feeble knees;” to “rejoice in the strength of his salvation;” and, under the most discouraging circumstances of life, trust in a heavenly Father to temper his judgments with mercy, and so order all things, that evil shall be overruled for good, and even affliction help him forward in the way that leadeth unto life eternal.

attack were varied, he resigned himself cheerfully to meet them; though of the most galling and contemptuous kind. "He gave his back to the smiters; "and his cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: "he hid not his face from shame and spitting." This part of our Saviour's history is well chosen for the Gospel of the day. It fulfils Isaiah's predictions—it bears powerful testimony to the malice with which these indignities were inflicted—and it exhibits in a most affecting manner the heavenly resignation with which they were endured.

But with Christ also, *faith* was the ground both of submission and resignation; it gave perseverance to the one—and cheerfulness to the other: even he, though a greater than Moses, had respect to the recompence of reward; and walked by *faith*. "The Lord God will help me, *therefore* have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed<sup>1</sup>."

Let us therefore heed Isaiah's exhortation—no longer to follow the devices of our own hearts; or as the prophet expresses it, "to walk in the light of *our own* fire, and in the sparks which *we* have kindled"—sparks, which, giving neither warmth to comfort, nor light to guide, make us to lie down in sorrow—let us rather trust "in the name of the Lord, and stay upon our God." Then, though we walk in the deep darkness of affliction, and see no cheering light from the world around us, we shall still have both guidance and comfort from *him* in whom we trust—for *he* lighteth every man that

<sup>1</sup> Epistle for the day.

cometh into the world, and is himself the eternal fountain of light, and life, and joy.



## WEDNESDAY BEFORE EASTER.

OUR blessed Saviour, at the close of his sojourn upon earth, informed the disciples of his intended removal from them; “now I go my way to HIM “that sent me.” Upon this, “sorrow filled their “hearts,” nor could they be reconciled to the prospect of losing his *personal* assistance and comfort, till, with his usual condescension and kindness, he had reasoned with them upon its *necessity*: “it is “*expedient* for you, that I go away; for if I go not “away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but “if I depart, I will send him unto you:” and, “when He—the Spirit of truth—is come, he will “guide you into all truth.” This reasoning had its due influence upon the mourners, who were thereby enabled to moderate their sorrow, and to prosecute, with ready zeal, the work appointed them.

Thus it is with ourselves. When at this season we recur with more especial earnestness and renewed sorrow, to the contemplation of our Redeemer’s sufferings, those parts of Scripture are presented to our attention, which may tend to convince us, that “it *behoved* Christ to suffer,” and “to die for “all.” Accordingly, in the Epistle for the day, we find this necessity very strikingly illustrated, by an allusion to the general habits of mankind in their *temporal* affairs. As the liberal intention of a bene-



factor, expressed towards others in his will, does not benefit them, till his death; so the glorious inheritance intended for us by Jesus Christ, would not have benefited us, unless He had *died*: for “where a testament (or will) is, there must also of “*necessity* be the death of the testator<sup>1</sup>.” For a testament—is “of no strength at all, while the testator liveth.”

Saint Paul then proceeds to use a different comparison. Having in view the religion of the Hebrews, to whom he was more particularly addressing himself, he speaks of the *new testament* of Jesus Christ, as a *covenant*, which was typified, or fore-shadowed, by the Mosaic dispensation, in which the covenant between God and man was sealed by the blood of sacrifices. “Whereupon neither the first testament “was dedicated without blood<sup>2</sup>.” The apostle hoped, that, by thus changing his figure of speech, and using a comparison in allusion to their customary religious services, he should more readily convince the Jews, that Jesus Christ, who shed his blood upon the cross, was no other than HE, whom their own prophets had foretold; and whose blood, so shed, had alone given efficacy to all their sacrifices, even from their first institution: for *Jesus Christ*,—as to all efficacy of expiation—was “the Lamb slain from “the foundation of the world<sup>3</sup>.”

If their hearts had not been hardened by sin, this allusion to their customary rites must have carried conviction with it; for they knew that Moses himself “took the blood of calves and of goats,” saying,

<sup>1</sup> Heb. ix. 16.<sup>2</sup> Ibid. ix. 18.<sup>3</sup> Rev. xiii. 8.

“ this is the *blood* of the *testament* which God hath enjoined unto you <sup>1</sup>.”

“ But what if some believed not? shall their unbelief make the faith of God of none effect? God forbid!”

We derive comfort from our very sorrow; for we believe, that *He*, whose sufferings we mourn, hath entered into heaven, as our great high priest, bearing *his own* blood, “ to appear in the presence of God for us;” as our mediator and advocate. Nay, our sorrow is turned even into joy, when, from a consideration of his past sufferings for our sins, we contemplate the prospect of his future glory, for “ unto *them* that look for him, he shall appear the second time, without sin, unto salvation <sup>2</sup>.”

Lest however the glorious advantages held out to us in the epistle, should elevate the soul to spiritual pride, the Gospel warns us, by the example of Saint Peter, to cherish a spirit of humility proportioned to our high privileges. Nor does any part of Scripture furnish a more instructive lesson upon the danger of self-confidence. Of all the Apostles, none was so courageous as Saint Peter; *He* bare the sword—*He* smote with it; regardless, at the moment, either of present danger, or future hazard—*His* was the resolved exclamation, “ Though I should *die* with thee, yet will I *not deny* thee.” Alas! the insecurity of human resolves to avoid trials of our faith; and the insufficiency of human strength to deliver us from the evil of them! He, who braved *death*, shrunk from *contempt* <sup>3</sup>. The heart which was undaunted

<sup>1</sup> Epistle for the day.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> The great lord Clarendon found, that to bear the contempt of

by an armed and furious multitude, sunk before the enquiring eye of a domestic servant, whose only weapon was the galling taunt, "Thou also art one of them<sup>1</sup>."

the proud was the severest trial of a Christian temper. "We have never more need of the influence of God's Spirit"—he observes—"than when those who oppress us, add contempt and scorn to their injustice, and when the spectators of our misery take occasion from thence to deride and despise our persons; nor can any thing preserve us, in those cases, from some unwarrantable excesses of grief, but the casting up our eyes unto Him from whom all afflictions come." The observation is of great weight, as coming from one who spoke from his own bitter experience. Clarendon had felt all the bitterness of faithful services ill requited by friends who forsook him, and recompensed with full measure of evil by enemies who triumphed over him. Under *all* the trials of life therefore he directs us to turn our view to God; for though "the lot be cast into the lap, the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord:" and however sickness, accident, and death, seem more immediately sent from God, while persecution, envy, hatred, and malice, appear the work of evil men, or evil spirits, they are permitted for a while, as instruments in the hand of Omnipotence, to work His Will—and his will is our salvation; even through much tribulation. It requires, however, a much more complete subjugation of pride to yield to what appear human inflictions, than to submit to what are more evidently divine visitations—for who does not feel it a harder task to submit to the injustice of a fellow man, than to the just, though severe chastenings of an Almighty God? Hence, the only safe plan which we can adopt is this—to consider *all things* which may happen to us, whether good or ill, as either ordered or permitted by that great Being, whose mercy is only equalled by his power, and who in both is infinite. When a man thus views the ills of life, it matters little what the "fraud and malice of the devil or man worketh against him:" he considers all ills, however varied in kind or degree, as making up together that *cup of life*, which it is his Father's good pleasure should be his portion. His therefore is the spirit and language of the beloved Son of God—"Not my will, but thine, O God, be done."

<sup>1</sup> The conduct of Saint Peter in his denial and consequent repent-

The more holy our resolutions are, the more earnestly we should seek for divine help to bring those resolutions to good effect. The weakness of man must fall, if the Lord doth not sustain him. But the Lord *will* sustain him. “My grace is sufficient for thee.” “My strength is made perfect in weakness.” The *humble* consider this and are *glad*; and, with St. Paul, “glory in their infirmities, that the *power* of *Christ* may rest upon them<sup>1</sup>.”

Whilst therefore we are required duly to prize our high calling, as sons of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven; and are permitted to rejoice that the inheritance is secured to us by the death of the testator, and by the covenant sealed with his blood; we must yet bear ourselves more and more humbly as we draw nearer and nearer to *that* hour, when we look to be admitted to our inheritance; for whoso thinketh he standeth, let him turn to the weeping Peter; let him be warned by the failure of the brave and daring apostle; and *himself* take heed, lest *he* also fall.



## THURSDAY BEFORE EASTER.

THIS day was used to be known by the name of *Maunday* Thursday, or the Thursday of the *Charge*: in commemoration of our Saviour's last charge or

ance is considered more at large in the comment upon the Collect for the seventeenth Sunday after Trinity, and that for St. Peter's day.

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. xii. 9.

*command*<sup>1</sup> to his church ; “ do this in remembrance “ of me.” Which *command* was delivered to his disciples, when, for the last time, he celebrated with them the feast of the Passover ; and instituted in its stead, the Holy Sacrament ; with a positive injunction for its continuance to the end of time <sup>2</sup>.

Wherefore, to keep in remembrance that solemn occasion, has ever been considered the distinguishing duty of Christians. Accordingly we find, that in the earliest Churches it was so strictly remembered, that their congregations seldom met together for public worship, without also partaking of the sacrament. They did eat bread and they drank wine, as “ Holy “ Mysteries ; pledges of their Divine Master’s love, “ and for a *continual* remembrance of his death, to “ their great and endless comfort <sup>3</sup>.” They did this in order to prove, as far as their obedience could bear them witness, that “ they did shew forth the “ Lord’s death till he come.”

That this frequency of communion should sometimes have been liable to perversion, will not surprise us, if we bear in mind the proneness of mankind to return to errors, unwillingly forsaken, and also consider the habits of life in those countries and cities where Christianity had gained admittance. Then, as now, “ the friendship of the world was “ enmity against God ;” whilst the effects which

<sup>1</sup> From the Latin word *mandatum*—a mandate, command, or charge. In former ages the word *commandment* was spelt thus “ *commaundment*.”

<sup>2</sup> Hence St. Paul speaks of our blessed Lord as, “ the *Lord*, our *passover*, sacrificed for us.” 1 Cor. v. 7.

<sup>3</sup> Exhortation in the Communion Service.



worldliness produced upon the soul, varied with the different habits of activity or indolence, which characterized different countries, or influenced particular cities.

At *Laodicea*, one of the seven Churches of Asia, —the inhabitants were sunk in a luxurious indolence, which affected them even in the high matters, which were between God and their souls. They no sooner found that the life of a Christian demanded zeal and energy, than they either “turned again to “their dumb idols,” or remained satisfied with the mere outward act. The spirit, which alone could have rendered it a service acceptable to God through Christ, was altogether wanting. *Lukewarmness* was *their* besetting sin; and at last brought down upon them the sentence of divine wrath: a sentence couched in terms, expressive at once of the deepest abhorrence of the sin, and the most contemptuous indignation at the nature of it<sup>1</sup>.

In the European Church of *Corinth*, the perversion of Christian duties assumed a different character: which difference had its rise in the peculiar situation of the place, and the local habits of its people. The luxury of the Corinthians was the fruit of commerce and its attendant hospitality and activity<sup>2</sup>: therefore not accompanied with that indolence which marked the luxurious Asiatics.

<sup>1</sup> Rev. iii. 14, 15, 16.

<sup>2</sup> The city of Corinth was placed in a situation of all others the most commanding for a great commercial city; being situated upon a narrow neck of land, which united populous and important countries.

To preserve their luxury, it became necessary that they should not relax from their activity or their hospitality. When therefore the gospel was offered unto *them*, they “received the word *gladly*.” No lukewarmness marked *their* reception of it. They entered upon its duties with alacrity and zeal. But—tenaciously clinging to the world—they attempted the impossible task, of reconciling the opposite services of God and Mammon, even in their most solemn religious ordinances.

The lamentable consequence of such a compromise is most powerfully declared by the Apostle. However the professed object of their assembling together might be, to honour God—yet such was the overbearing influence of human passion when allowed to mingle with spiritual feeling, that by degrees spirituality was lost altogether. They met, even at the holy sacrament, as at an earthly banquet: not only were the poorer brethren excluded, because they could bring to the feast *no* share of carnal things; but those who were assembled did eat and drink till they were drunken: sinking the Christian character to a level with brute beasts, which have no understanding; and polluting their feasts of charity with the most shameless licentiousness.

Who then can wonder at St. Paul’s strong denunciation of woe against men, who received the holy sacrament *thus unworthily*? Surely they did condemn *themselves*, as “guilty of the body and blood “of the Lord.” Professing to serve *God* at their feasts, they served their own lusts, and did “eat “and drink their own damnation, not *discerning* “the Lord’s body”—not making just discernment

or *distinction* between food for the body, and food for the soul.

These denunciations, however, are not intended to discourage *us* from attending this holy ordinance, as it is observed in our Church. All is there done agreeably to the apostolic injunction—decently, and in order—the bread and wine are tasted, and considered as emblems sanctified to the service of God, by the appointment of Him, whose body and blood they represent. There, high and low, rich and poor, meet together with one consent, grateful for common blessings from God, the maker of them all.

It *may* happen, that of the individuals assembled, *some* are unworthy ; such are the self-righteous, the uncharitable, the proud, and the worldly. But such are *not invited* to draw near. Those only are *bidden* to that holy feast, who “ do truly and earnestly  
“ repent them of their sins, are in love and charity  
“ with their neighbours, and intend to lead a new  
“ life, following the commandments of God, and  
“ walking from henceforth in his holy ways<sup>1</sup>.” Thus the Church itself vigilantly guards against an unworthy administration of this holy ordinance, and warns the communicants against an unworthy partaking of it<sup>2</sup>: and whosoever, after such warning,

<sup>1</sup> See the address in our Liturgy, “ to them that come to receive  
“ the Holy Communion.”

<sup>2</sup> The various circumstances connected with the first establishment of the Church of Christ were so wisely ordered, and, by God’s merciful providence, have been so minutely recorded, that they serve, even to this day, as a sure guide to us, whenever difficulties occur in the regulation of the Church: and it is hardly possible for any contingency to arise, the peculiar difficulty of which is not as it were pro-

presents himself as a communicant, is supposed to have repented sincerely—to be in charity with all

vided against in the sacred record. Thus, when an objection is started against attendance at the holy communion, upon the plea, that *some* attend that solemn ordinance, who prove, by the carelessness of their lives, that they are but false worshippers, and make a mockery of religion—we refer the objector to the circumstances which attended the first celebration of that holy ordinance. View the first congregation assembled at the sacrament! The Saviour “sat down with the *twelve*.” Of these *One* was about to *deny* Him; *Another*, to *betray* Him. Yet the command was—“Drink ye *All* of this.” The ordinance was accompanied by marked solemnity of words and feeling—and was enjoined to be perpetually remembered, as the symbol of a more immediate union betwixt Christ and his Church; by a spiritual partaking of which “we do shew the Lord’s “death, till he come.” 1 Cor. xi. 26. Thus it is clear, that at its first appointment its sanctity was unsullied, its efficacy unweakened, even though an erring Peter and a hardened Judas partook of its consecrated elements: and all this was permitted by the blessed Founder of our religion, that the Church might learn, for ever, that in like manner, though the unworthy would sometimes be found to mingle with the worthy communicant—No man is therefore to doubt the holy power of the ordinance.

In pursuing this train of thought, it would appear as if the different end of the two offenders was recorded in its peculiar minuteness, with the merciful intention of instructing us in the true value of ordinances—not of themselves able to keep us from falling, but means of grace, whereby we may hope to gain strength to recover ourselves: God’s grace both preventing and following us. Against presumption we are more especially guarded. Peter fell, but recovered. Judas fell, and perished. Peter, when he received the elements of grace, received them with a heart, whose only fault seems to have been, too lofty a feeling of his devotedness to Christ. When therefore he fell, the grace of God did raise him up, and restored the weeping penitent to peace. When Judas received the elements, he received them into a heart *pre-occupied with evil*, already filled with plans of treachery to satisfy the lust of avarice, and gratify the malice of a depraved mind. In such a heart the spirit of grace could not abide: for what fellowship hath light with dark-

men—and earnestly to desire *that* holiness, which the means of grace of which he partakes are calculated to impart. Whether he be sincere, or insincere, no fellow-man can determine. The *heart* can be known to God alone.

The strong language therefore of the Apostle is not intended to discourage the *humble* communicant. Neither will any alarm which it may cause, be an excuse for neglecting the duty itself: the fear of unworthiness cannot preclude the necessity of that holiness of life, and humble consciousness of demerit, which manifestly tend to render us fit objects of the mercy of God. If a man fears the consequences of *partaking unworthily*—he should also fear the consequences of *not partaking at all*: “then Jesus “said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, “except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and “drink his blood, ye have no life in you<sup>1</sup>.”

It is in reference to this solemn declaration of HIM who first instituted these holy mysteries, that

ness? When therefore *he* fell, the grace he had rejected was not at hand to raise him. Before the idol of his avarice he had bowed; he had fallen—and where he bowed, there he fell down dead.

If therefore you would gain at the table of the Lord that grace, of which the elements you share are the signs, carry with you thither—not a heart secretly filled with evil, either towards God, or towards man: God forbid! for then, like Judas, you mock God and his Christ, and tempt the Spirit to leave you to your own devices—but bear with you “that honest and true heart,” which our Saviour himself implies to be within your attainment. Luke viii. 15. *Then*, if in after time, you, like Peter, fall in your infirmity, you may hope that the grace given may raise you—may help your infirmity—may enable you to return unto the Lord your God. *Then*, even as a penitent, you may go on your way rejoicing.

<sup>1</sup> John vi. 53.



our Church has ever considered the Sacrament of the body and blood of Christ, a badge at once of its duties and its privileges, till time shall be no longer. We should do well to remember this, more especially at the present holy season ; and, by withdrawing our thoughts from the world, to seek the Lord while he may be found, and call upon him while he is near. It is a bold venture to *defer* our duty. It is “ to boast of the morrow,” though we know not what a day may bring forth.

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## 28. GOOD-FRIDAY.

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### FIRST COLLECT.

*ALMIGHTY God, we beseech thee graciously to behold this thy family, for which our Lord Jesus Christ was contented to be betrayed, and given up into the hands of wicked men, and to suffer death upon the cross ; who now liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.*

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## 29.

### SECOND COLLECT.

*ALMIGHTY and everlasting God, by whose Spirit the whole body of the Church is governed and sanctified ; receive our supplications and prayers which we offer before thee, for all estates of men in thy holy Church ; that every member of the same,*

*in his vocation and ministry, may truly and godly serve thee, through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.*

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## 30.

## THIRD COLLECT.

*O MERCIFUL God, who hast made all men, and hatest nothing that thou hast made, nor wouldst the death of a sinner, but rather that he should be converted, and live; have mercy upon all Jews, Turks, Infidels, and Heretics; and take from them all ignorance, hardness of heart, and contempt of thy word; and so fetch them home, blessed Lord, to thy flock, that they may be saved among the remnant of the true Israelites, and be made one fold under one shepherd, Jesus Christ our Lord; who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, world without end. Amen.*

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THIS is our solemn fast day.

It is called *Good-Friday*, because Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, suffered death upon the cross, as on this day, and secured to mankind the hope of gaining hereafter “those *good things*, “which God hath prepared for them who love “Him.”

The Church therefore, as we have seen, hath carefully prepared her people for a proper observance of it, by the previous services enjoined them.

What contending feelings crowd upon our mind, when we contemplate the *occasion* of this fast! Joy

and gratitude, sorrow and shame, at once strive in our hearts for the mastery. The whole page of history records no fact of equal importance, or of so high an interest, as the crucifixion of the Son of God.

One is condemned to die by the very judge, who most anxiously declares him to be innocent<sup>1</sup>.

The circumstances attending his death, prove that the victim was, what he had declared himself, "the Son of God with power." The veil of the temple was rent, when *He*, who sanctified it, did, by his sacrifice, admit within its sanctuary a redeemed world. The very inanimate objects of nature confessed him their God. The sun shrouded his glory, when the light of the world did die: the graves did open and give up their dead, when the Lord of life and death gave his life an offering for sin. What a scene! the earth darkening—the graves opening—the Saviour of the world expiring!—

The astonished spectator of such a scene would at once enquire—for *what* these wonders? for *whom* this death? Happy for mankind the answer! For a *guilty* world the Son of God did die! that *all* might return to God, as children of the same heavenly Father, and heirs of the same heavenly inheritance.

It is in this view of the subject that our Church has framed her Collects for the day. She would teach us that if God was pleased to conclude "*all*" "in unbelief, that he might have *mercy* upon *all*,"

<sup>1</sup> John xix. 6. "I find no fault in him," was the public declaration of the Roman governor.

<sup>2</sup> Equally the Gentile world, and his chosen Israel.

we are bound by no common obligation, to exercise towards *all* the most enlarged charity, and to give practical evidence of gratitude for *our own* advantages under the Gospel, by a tender compassion for those, who have either *rejected*, or as yet remain *ignorant* of them.

The three Collects, if considered in their order, will shew this. The *first* is an humble prayer of the congregation, that God would *graciously* behold them, as his *family*, through the Saviour Christ Jesus; “of whom the whole family in heaven and “earth is named.”

Nor is this humble strain of supplication less becoming or less necessary, because we “are called “the sons of God<sup>1</sup>.” We are as dependent upon divine grace for a *continuance* of the holy dispositions and glorious hopes of adopted children, as for adoption itself. If Judas, though one of the chosen family of Christ, “by transgression fell,” so shall *we* fall, unless our natural proneness to evil be counteracted, and our weak endeavours after holiness be strengthened, by the powerful influence of the grace of God. Rejoice therefore, as we may well do, in the strength of our salvation, and grateful as we must ever be—*too* grateful we *cannot* be—to *him* “who was contented to be betrayed and given “up into the hands of wicked men, and to suffer “death upon the cross for *us*<sup>2</sup>,” yet, we are not to be negligent in the duties of active holiness, because God and his Christ have been bounteous in mercy. No member of a family can reasonably expect to

<sup>1</sup> 1 John iii. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Comment on the preceding Monday.

enjoy its protection and comforts, unless he submit to the regulations of it. Now *we* are the family of *God*; and HE, who is “head over all,” is in a more especial manner head over *us*. It behoves us therefore, if we would live at peace, to live in *obedience*. Whilst the written word teaches us how to regulate our lives, the Holy Spirit enables us to follow the regulations laid down; and by working not merely *for* us, but *with* us, so prospers the work of our hands upon us, that at last, we are enabled to “work out our own salvation;” and in so doing, gain—that, which throughout, has been the offered prize of our high calling—Honour and Glory and Immortality.



## 29. GOOD-FRIDAY.



### SECOND COLLECT.

*ALMIGHTY and everlasting God, by whose spirit the whole body of the Church is governed and sanctified; receive our supplications and prayers which we offer before thee, for all estates of men in thy holy Church; that every member of the same, in his vocation and ministry, may truly and godly serve thee, through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.*

HAVING thus contemplated the crucified Saviour, as the founder of *our own* hopes, we extend our view to the whole body of the Church, of which we form a part: for as we believe in one Lord, one faith,



one baptism, so we feel it to be of no small moment to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. And this Unity can be preserved only by the Spirit which is from above; and for which we here pray.

Our petition in this *second* Collect is, that not only the assembled congregation, as a family, may be blessed in their Heavenly Father—but that the same blessing may be extended to all the members of the Holy Catholic Church—that mystical body of which Jesus Christ is the head. The language of the prayer is in the pure and comprehensive spirit of Christian charity.

It includes *all*, who are called by the holy name of Christ; that whatever be their gifts and office, their calling and condition, they may *all* “truly and “godly serve the Lord:” yielding themselves to the influence of his Spirit, by whom the whole body of the Church is governed and sanctified. For in that Church not only the wise and the learned—the rich and the great—but the simple and the unlearned—the poor and the lowly meet together. When it was announced, that “to the *poor* the gospel is preached,” it was evident, that the poor would no longer have excuse for neglect of religion, on the plea of their obscurity. *Their* acceptance of the Gospel was part of *that* system, by the establishing of which, the glory of God, as well as the welfare of man, was to be enlarged upon earth. However poor therefore the station, however low be the Christian’s vocation, let him but glorify God by leading a holy and religious life, and he will be an object of divine love and favour. “Him that honoureth me—I,” saith God, “will honour.” Piety crowns the poorest with honour.

Our prayer then is, that a spirit of sanctification and obedience may “keep the Holy Church universal in the right way”—that wheresoever the Gospel is preached, not only true religion may be established, but that heartfelt piety also may for ever flourish and abound<sup>1</sup>; and such be the abiding practical efficacy of the Spirit of God, even in these latter days, that a Christian may be known as well *now*, as of old time, by an unvarying and unconfined charity towards his brethren: for, however they be dispersed throughout the world, he considers them *not* as “strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens “with the Saints, and of the household of God.” He prays for *them*; that they also, being members of the Church of God, may, in their vocation and ministry, unite with him in one common service—even the service of God: and that, being called in one hope of their calling, and sharers of the same

<sup>1</sup> See in our liturgy the prayer for the Parliament.

The clause in it, where we pray that “religion and piety may be established amongst us,” presents a distinction of terms, which is highly instructive; pointing out to us, that our petition is both for general and individual holiness. We pray not only that *religion*,—purity of doctrine and apostolical worship—may be for ever established in the body of the Church; but that *piety*—heart-felt devotion, and good conduct as the fruit of devotion—may flourish and abound in each *individual* member of the same. Thus the congregation, whilst they pray with one accord for the preservation of national religion, in the purity of its doctrines and ordinances; also pray, each for himself, that they may not dishonour that religion, but, as they wish well to the form and ordinances thereof, may be pious in heart, exemplary in conduct; and, doing all things to the glory of God, may so let their “light shine before men; that they “may see their good works, and glorify their Father which is in “Heaven.”

grace here, they may at last be called to the same everlasting rest, through their only Saviour and Redeemer, Jesus Christ the Lord.

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### 30. GOOD-FRIDAY.

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#### THIRD COLLECT.

*O MERCIFUL God, who hast made all men, and hatest nothing that thou hast made, nor wouldest the death of a sinner, but rather that he should be converted, and live; Have mercy upon all Jews, Turks, Infidels, and Heretics; and take from them all ignorance, hardness of heart, and contempt of thy Word; and so fetch them home, blessed Lord, to thy flock, that they may be saved among the remnant of the true Israelites, and be made one fold under one shepherd, Jesus Christ our Lord; who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, world without end. Amen.*

IT is not enough that our hearts expand with charity towards all our Fellow-*Christians*: we are here taught to love all our Fellow-*Creatures*; and to pray not only for the universal Church of Christ, but for the whole race of mankind: because, as “God made *all* men, and hateth nothing that he hath made;” so, “He willeth not the death of a sinner, but rather that he be converted and live.” Convinced of this truth, and deeply sensible

of our undeserved advantage, in having been called to a state of grace by the Gospel, we implore of our Heavenly Father to convert *all* who are in error, and to lead *them* also into the way of that truth, in the light of which *we* live.

The enemies of our faith are in this Collect specified as "Jews, Turks, Infidels, and Heretics." These err either in "ignorance, hardness of heart, or "contempt of the word:" from all of which errors we beseech God to deliver them.

"Hardness of heart"—applies more particularly to the Jews, in their rejection of the Messiah. They continue, to this day, the same obstinate people, who were for ages most signally characterized as a "stiff-necked generation." Indeed, their state, from their dispersion after the destruction of Jerusalem, till the present time, is so very peculiar, and displays so continual a fulfilment of the prophetic judgments denounced against unbelief, that they may be considered as a living miracle. In every civilized country they have a habitation; yet they are not incorporated with any people. Their riches cannot secure them from contempt. They are a proverb in the world—a taunt—a by-word. But the Prophecies thus fulfilled, or now fulfilling, respecting this nation, are as a sealed book to *them*. They have "eyes "and see not;" for the "day of the Lord is upon "them<sup>1</sup>."

<sup>1</sup> Isaiah ii. 12. Even their patience under cruel exactions and most scornful usage in almost every part of the world, is so extraordinary, that it assumes the character of a judicial endurance of evil. Were it not that God's judgment is upon them, why should

Yet, ourselves being saved only by grace—grafted branches of that Olive Tree, of which the Jews are the *root*<sup>1</sup>—we learn not to be high-minded, but to fear; lest God, who spared not the unbelieving Jews, though the natural branches, spare not us, if we be unfaithful: since we are but a wild Olive Tree grafted in<sup>2</sup>. Our souls therefore are humble even under a sense of our high advantages; we join in the Apostle's heart-felt prayer, that all Israel may be saved<sup>3</sup>; that God would be pleased to call again his own; receive them to his mercy; and unite them with *us*, as His people for ever.

We next pray for the “Turks:” who are worshippers of the false prophet, Mahomet<sup>4</sup>.

they remain in lands where they are evil-entreated, and persecuted? Why not, rich as they are, avail themselves of the means afforded by wealth, and seek countries where they might rest, at least unharmed if not encouraged; undespised if not honoured? Why, for instance, not leave Grecian pride and Asiatic cruelty, and fly to this favoured land of freedom and rest for every nation under heaven?—The hand of God is upon them! They *are* to be scattered for a season among *all* nations:—They *are* to be a proverb and a by-word; they *are* to exist, living monuments of divine anger, and bearing in legible characters upon their condition, the fatal sentence their own forefathers did invoke upon them—“His blood be on us” and on our children.”

<sup>1</sup> Rom. xi. 18.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. xi. 17.

<sup>3</sup> Rom. x. 1.

<sup>4</sup> It may be right, for the instruction of my younger readers, to observe that Mahomet, the Arabian impostor, was one of those false prophets predicted by our blessed Lord; Matt. xxiv. 4, 5, 24. The effect of his doctrines, in darkening the moral sense of mankind, is powerfully foretold by St. John, Rev. ix. 2. when upon the opening of the bottomless pit “there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the “smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened “by reason of the smoke of the pit.” Mahomet came into notice



These enemies of our religion are remarkable for the contempt with which they treat the name and

about the opening of the seventh century \*. Gifted with extraordinary talents, both as a politician and a warrior, he directed them all to the establishment of a new code of religion; asserting that he was himself the last and chosen prophet of the Almighty to a guilty world. For some years previous to his assumption of the prophetic office he lived secluded from the world, amid the desert places of his native country; and, during his abode there, having worked up his imagination to the highest pitch of enthusiasm, directed his whole energies to realize the dreamy visions of conquest and glory, which had so long been familiar to him in the solitary cave of Hera †. When at length he emerged from his concealment, and set up his standard, as the standard of the Most High, he delivered to his followers the “Koran,” a book in which he had laid down those laws of political and religious government, which, as he falsely asserted, were committed to him by an angel from heaven. He established this false religion by the sword—sparing none who resisted it; and the vast extent of Mahometanism too well proves how well his valour executed the wondrous schemes of conquest, which his hopes suggested and his sagacity contrived.

How opposite is the character of *that* Being, who gave to the world the Gospel of reconciliation! How different the means whereby *his* law was established! Meek and lowly—of no reputation and seeking none—neither ambitious of worldly power to spread abroad his doctrines, nor applying forcibly what power he had—the Son of Man came, “*not to destroy men’s lives, but to save them.*” “*Peace on earth*” was the herald’s proclamation to all men. The only sword permitted in the cause of Christ, was the sword of the Spirit, the word of God—the only armies arrayed to assert the excellence of his religion—the noble army of unresisting martyrs. Whilst the furious doctrines of the prophet of Mecca rouse every fiercer passion of a fallen and degraded humanity, the Gospel of Jesus Christ brings down every lofty imagination, allays every turbulent feeling,

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\* He was born at Mecca, in Arabia, A. D. 571, and died A. D. 632 at Medina. The year 622 forms the celebrated æra of the Mahometans.

† Hera, a cave near Mecca.

faith of Christ; whilst they persecute his followers with the most malicious cruelty. The doctrines of their faith have a natural tendency to degrade the mind, and debase its faculties. By supposing every event to be unchangeably fated, they disallow man's free agency, and thereby virtually remove his responsibility: thus opening an unbounded field for the range of sin.

Even the *future* rewards of the Moslem faith are calculated to excite the lowest passions, and to supply the most dangerous motives for adherence to their Prophet. By encouraging the imagination in anticipations of sensual gratification, as the bliss of their paradise, they foster every fiercer passion, till an utter selfishness predominates; and there is no room for that purity of heart, which alone can be acceptable before God,—no room for that charity, which by cherishing feelings of kindness towards *all* mankind, brings “peace on earth—good will towards “men.”

Of Infidels, there are various kinds.

Some are infidels, without the guilt of infidelity. These are they, who have never heard of the name of Christ; and therefore *cannot* believe in him. Such are the uncivilized heathens of those distant lands,

and purifies every inordinate affection, that so his followers may raise their affection to things above, and become meet to be inheritors with the Saints in light.

Grateful therefore ourselves for the blessed gift of the *true* religion, we are well taught by our Church to pray the Giver of all good things, to *extend* that his precious gift, and to spread abroad, even among the darkened followers of the Arabian impostor, those scriptures, in which alone we think—and think truly—that we have eternal life.

with which Christian countries have at present little or no communication. These will not be condemned for their ignorance. If indeed they have done evil, knowing to do good—if they have erred, in opposition to the light of reason, and the natural law of conscience—"Sin lieth at the door<sup>1</sup>." But if they have done well according to their knowledge, wherefore should they not be accepted? Whatever strong expressions occur in the services of our Church—stating the absolute necessity of faith in Christ "to "as many as would be saved," can apply only to

<sup>1</sup> Nothing is more certain than that punishment will overtake sin. We may be sure, that a man's sin will find him out. (Numb. xxxii. 23.) This is signified very strikingly in the descriptive manner, which marks the solemn assurance of the Almighty to Cain, that as surely as reward awaiteth the good, punishment overtaketh the wicked. (Gen. iv. 7.) Abel, doubtless in obedience to divine command, offered to God, in sacrifice, the blood of "the firstlings of the flock;" typical of the blood of the Lamb, slain from the foundation of the world. Cain, disregarding the shedding of the blood of sacrifice, as prefiguring the atoning sacrifice of the future Messiah—neglected this divine ordinance, and satisfied himself with bringing the fruit of the ground, as an offering unto the Lord. To Abel and *his* offering, the Lord had respect. But to Cain and *his* offering he had not respect. Upon this, "Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell." God, who willeth not the death of a sinner, but rather that he should be converted and live, condescends to reason with the sullen murmurer; and points out to him, that if *he* did well, as his brother Abel had done, *he* also should be accepted—but if he did not well, that sin, and the consequences of it, did of course remain to him—did "lie at the door," as it were: there crouching; and like an angry lion, delaying to seize the victim, only till occasion should arise to make the prey more sure, and render its destruction more signal. No image can better picture to the mind the sure, though often delayed punishment of the soul hardened in its guilt.

those, who have *heard* of Christ<sup>1</sup>. Neither the reward of believing in the Saviour, nor the condemnation of unbelief, are applicable to Beings, to whom he has never been preached. With respect to *them*, we believe with the Apostle, that whether righteous or unrighteous, they are “a law unto themselves<sup>2</sup> ;” and therefore in the true spirit of charity we apply to ourselves the threats and the promises of the dispensation of Christ; and implore him, who is the maker of us all, to dispel the clouds of ignorance, and bring into his marvellous light the nations yet in darkness.

Others there are, infidels in so awful a sense of the term, that cold indeed must be the heart, which prays not fervently for their conversion. Of *these* men, some, buoyed up with the pride of intellect, will not bend to the humbling doctrine of the cross, which brings every lofty imagination into subjection to the law of Christ; and so reject altogether the Gospel of peace. Others, leading wicked lives, will

<sup>1</sup> We should always bear this in mind, when we repeat the promises and threats in the Athanasian Creed. We shall then be aware, that those clauses in the Creed, which *seem* of harsher character than the Gospel of peace might warrant, are simply the declaration of assent, from professing Christians, to the plain and express words of our Lord, after he was risen from the dead—“He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damned.” (Mark xvi. 16.) The words affect not the heathen, to whom the Gospel has never been revealed—for how can they believe on HIM, of whom they have not heard? They affect those, who, like ourselves, believe and embrace the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and by claiming the privileges and the blessings of it, voluntarily render ourselves liable to its conditions and its penalties.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. ii. 14.

not allow the authority of a religion, which, by the holiness of its doctrines, and the purity of its precepts, would condemn the depravity of their hearts, and shame the licentiousness of their conduct. For it is not so much that they *deny* the *excellence* of our religion, as that they *hate* its *purity*—and refuse to yield to its influence, because that influence would make them holy.

We pray likewise in this Collect for Heretics.

A heretic is any one, who, in matters of religion, is not contented with the truth, as it is plainly to be understood from the word of God ; but *chooses* some *new* doctrine, and persists in upholding it against the pure and plain doctrines of the Gospel<sup>1</sup>. Even St. Paul found that divisions and *heresies* crept into his churches<sup>2</sup>. We cannot but expect that they will still more boldly declare themselves in these our days of increasing self-sufficiency. Many there are, so vain in self-conceit, that—denying *some* doctrines of the Gospel, even whilst they receive *others*—they cast dishonour upon *all* ; and, absurdly, leave every man to choose out of Christianity a religion suited to his own arbitrary and perverse opinions. All therefore which can be done by the ministers and stewards of God's mysteries, and by the faithful of

<sup>1</sup> Heresies, indeed, are of various kinds, and operate in various ways ; directly, and indirectly. Ignatius speaks of some, which, consisting of subtle false doctrines mixed up with a few truths of Christianity, gradually undermine spiritual life ; and he poetically, but justly, compares the man who adopts them, to one for whom they, who compass his death, mingle poison with sweet wine. Such an one is too readily enticed to quaff the deadly potion ; but knows not, tasting death.—*Ign. ad Trall.*

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. xi. 18, 19.



his household, is to offer up prayers for them, that they may be converted; and that the object which the apostle declares God to have in view, in permitting the existence of heresies, may in *us* be accomplished—"that they who are approved, may be "made manifest<sup>1</sup>."

This comprehensive Collect for *all* our fellow-creatures is very appropriately appointed for Good-Friday: since it is a day on which we commemorate *His* death, who died for *all* men—for the sins of the *whole world*. It is therefore highly becoming in us, humbly to supplicate the God of *all*, to look in mercy upon *all*, through Jesus Christ his Son—to enlarge his kingdom—to effect the conversion of Jews, Turks, Infidels, and Heretics—that the cross of Christ be no more a stumbling block and rock of offence to unbelievers; that the heretic may see the error of his ways; may learn that God is "the "author of peace and not of confusion;" a God, who would have all to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Let us then close our solemn services of this day, by uniting in a common heart-felt supplication, that the great Shepherd of Israel, who never slumbereth nor sleepeth, would have us all in his watchful charge—recovering the wanderer, restoring the lost, and so fetching *all* home to his flock, that in his own good time we may be made one fold under one shepherd, Jesus Christ; who with the Father and the Holy Spirit, liveth and reigneth, ever one God, world without end.

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. xi. 19.

### 31. EASTER EVEN.

*GRANT, O Lord, that as we are baptized into the death of thy blessed Son our Saviour Jesus Christ; so by continual mortifying our corrupt affections, we may be buried with him; and that through the grave and gate of death, we may pass to our joyful resurrection, for his merits, who died, and was buried, and rose again for us; thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

AFTER contemplating the sufferings of the Saviour, and bearing in mind, that love towards us was the motive which induced him to undergo them, we are led by our church to keep holy the day, which intervenes between his death and resurrection: and, if our meditations have had any beneficial effect upon us, there will be no backwardness to this devotion. We shall, like the disciples on their way to Emmaus<sup>1</sup>, readily give up to serious meditation,

<sup>1</sup> Luke xxiv. 15. 28, 29, 30, 31. "And it came to pass, that, while they communed together, and reasoned, Jesus himself drew near, and went with them."—"And they drew nigh unto the village whither they went: and he made as though he would have gone further. But they constrained him, saying, abide with us; for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And he went in to tarry with them. And it came to pass, as he sat at meat with them, he took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them. And their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight."

The manner in which this scene is presented to us is as strikingly beautiful, as the circumstances of it are solemn and impressive. It

the short interval of time, between the dark hour which saw the hope of Israel expire, and the morn-

is a scene, replete with instruction also. How powerfully does it encourage us to exercise ourselves in religious thoughts and conversation! how plainly are we taught *so* to have God in all our thoughts, that whatever occasions arise, whether of doubt in cases of difficulty, or fear in seasons of distress, we should be ever ready to flee to *Him*—to talk of all his wondrous works, to meditate upon his providential care over us aforesaid, and trust him to fulfil, in his own good time, all those gracious promises of strength and rest to the soul, by which he supports the faithful followers of his Son. And sure it is, that to such of his disciples as thus do exercise themselves in holy meditation and holy converse, the Saviour is present: not visibly indeed, but by that Spirit—that *other Comforter*—which he declares is to abide with us *always*.

But are Cleopas and his companion the only disciples whose “eyes are opened,” and to whom the crucified Saviour is more evidently made known by their eating bread with him as they sit at meat with him at his table! Are theirs the only “hearts, that “burn within them,” as they commune with their Redeemer!—Surely, the humble communicants of every age and nation, as often as their devout communings, their religious converse, and their daily talk of God, have been crowned by an earnest, and “con-“straining” prayer that the Lord would “abide with them,” eating bread together—they *likewise* must confess, that the solemn ordinance has opened *their* eyes also to his character, and displayed him to the eye of Faith, as the promised “Redeemer of Israel!” *Their* hearts also did “burn within them,” as they ate and drank the emblems of that Sacrifice, which taketh away their sins, restores to them the favour of God, and by its justifying and sanctifying influence, gives them that peace which passeth all understanding, and animates them to patience here by a promise of a glory hereafter, which so far from fading with passing ages, shall be for ever brightening through a blissful eternity.

Hast thou—who now readest these pages—hast *thou* left yet untried this holy way of approach to the Saviour?—Do not longer trifle with thine own eternal happiness! Seek the Lord, while he may be found—call upon him while he is near. Wisely, like the disciples on their way to Emmaus, let your thoughts be of God, the only Saviour—and as you hope to be saved by his sacrifice, take

ing on which, according to his own prophecy, he rose again and triumphed over death.

To assist us in these meditations, we find a Collect, with proper services, appointed for this day.

The *confession*, in the opening of the Collect,—that “we are baptized into the death” of Christ,—and the *duty* which results from it—that “by continual mortifying our corrupt affections, we should “be buried with him”—*Both* are founded upon the appeal of St. Paul to his Roman converts, and the instruction which he afterwards draws from it. “Know ye not that as many of us as were baptized “into Jesus Christ, were baptized into his death<sup>1</sup>?” This language—monitory at least, if not reproving—was called forth by the proneness of the more ardent, yet misjudging converts, to attribute man’s salvation, through Jesus Christ, so entirely to the workings of God’s grace, as to suppose exertions in holiness altogether vain: “therefore,” adds the apostle, “like as Christ was raised up from the “dead, even so we also should walk in newness of “life.” Thus the Collect would remind us, that however ardent may be our faith in a Saviour, whose blood cleanseth from all sin, our faith will be vain, without obedience; our reliance on grace presumptuous, unless we be diligent in every good word and work.

In order to illustrate this, our Collect refers us to the sacrament of baptism: nor could any comparison more plainly instruct us on the subject.

heed to be faithful to that word, which bids you, “Do this in remembrance of Me!”

<sup>1</sup> Rom. vi. 3.

At this rite, as administered in warm climates, the whole person of the infant is placed under water: an act, which is strikingly significant of resignation of life, and easily leads us to this instructive inference; that so likewise, *we*, who are baptized into the faith of a dying Saviour, should ourselves die unto sin: living no longer therein, but having our senses as completely deadened to its influence, as though they were dissolved; every feeling of the soul—its aversions and desires—its hopes and fears—being henceforth exercised, not in the things of the world, nor in the service of our own hearts—but in the contemplation of spiritual things, and in the service of HIM, into whose name, and into obedience to whose laws, we are baptized: “dead unto sin, but alive unto God.” And if our corrupt affections be *entirely* mortified, we may then be considered as *buried* with our Saviour in the grave; unmoved by the evils of the world, and having no thoughts but for God.

Our dissolution is appropriately termed “the grave and gate of death.”

By this forcible expression, the thoughtless are recalled to reflection; the heartless roused to feeling; and *all* warned to pause, and meditate upon the change which awaiteth every man. When that gate shall open, a new world will be before us! a display of all which is dreadful—of all which is peaceful. On the one hand—“a worm that dieth not, and a fire that is not quenched<sup>1</sup>; with weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth!” On the

<sup>1</sup> Mark ix. 44.



other hand, a place of rest, which nothing may disturb—unchangeable happiness ; cloudless glory ; fulness of joy in the immediate presence of God !

In which of these *new* scenes shall *we* be actors ? Shall we dwell with the devil, and his angels, and the spirits of the accursed, in the dismal regions of darkness—our mouths filled with cursing, and our hearts with remorse ? Or shall we be admitted to share, with just men made perfect, the service of angels, in hymning the glories of redemption—our souls purified, our bodies glorified, and ourselves made like unto God in holiness and happiness for ever ?

To these questions our consciences honestly give answer—that as our course *now* is, so will be our place *then*.

The Gospel—like the grave—opens to us *two* different scenes. On the one hand, “ wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction :” on the other hand, “ strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, that leadeth unto life <sup>1</sup>.” Let each of us then examine himself. In which of the two ways am I walking ? am I in the way which leadeth, through the grave, unto everlasting life ? Or am I in the way which leadeth to everlasting destruction ? If I would pass, through the gate of death, to my *joyful* resurrection, I must now, like a prudent traveller, take the road which leadeth thither—neither deterred from pursuing a steadfast course by the trials and dangers which surround me ; nor allured from the appointed way by the temptations

<sup>1</sup> Matt. vii. 13, 14.

of pleasure, or of ease, which would entice me to halt in my weary pilgrimage. I must act as a Christian pilgrim. I must be active and patient, brave and watchful; looking homeward: for though I can be saved only through “*his* merit, who died, “and was buried, and rose again,” I must yet strive to be holy, and just, and good—I must “follow “after holiness, without which no man shall see “the Lord<sup>1</sup>:” I must follow *him*, who alone is the way, and the truth, and the life—the true way, which leadeth unto life eternal.



## 32. EASTER-DAY.



### THE ANTHEMS.

#### I.

*CHRIST our passover is sacrificed for us: therefore let us keep the feast.*

*Not with the old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. 1 Cor. v. 7.*

#### II.

*Christ being raised from the dead, dieth no more: death hath no more dominion over him;*

*For in that he died, he died unto sin once; but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God.*

<sup>1</sup> Heb. xii. 14.

*Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin : but alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Rom. vi. 9.*

## III.

*Christ is risen from the dead ; and become the first-fruits of them that slept.*

*For since by man came death ; by man came also the resurrection of the dead.*

*For as in Adam all die ; even so in Christ shall all be made alive. 1 Cor. xv. 20.*

*Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost ;*

*As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.*



## 33. THE COLLECT.

*ALMIGHTY God, who through thine only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, hast overcome death, and opened unto us the gate of everlasting life ; we humbly beseech thee, that as by thy special grace preventing us, thou dost put into our minds good desires ; so, by thy continual help, we may bring the same to good effect, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.*

THE resurrection of Jesus Christ is the most important article of our belief ; because it is the very

foundation of our faith and hope. "If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain, you are yet in your sin. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ, are perished." "But now is Christ risen from the dead," and in Him "shall all be made alive." Our Church therefore marks the day, by a distinguished Hymn of praise; and directs us—by announcing a risen Saviour in strains of holy gratulation—both to evidence our faith in the glorious tidings, and animate others to partake our joy.

The *three* Anthems are selected from the writings of St. Paul.

# I.

THE *first* Anthem tempers present joy by recalling past sorrow: in order that whilst we rejoice and "keep the feast," we may *never* forget, that our sins shed the blood of Christ, our Passover<sup>1</sup>—that the Angel of death *spared us*, only to strike *him*—and that our rejoicing should be a spiritual and sanctified feeling. Walking therefore spiritually with Him, who "died for our sins, and rose again for our justification," we keep the feast, "not with the old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth<sup>2</sup>:" putting away from us malice and wickedness, we cherish sincerity in all our thoughts before God, and truth in all our dealings with mankind.

<sup>1</sup> Exod. xii. 13.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. v. 8.

## II.

The *second* Anthem celebrates the Messiah's victory over death, and joyfully declares that his warfare is for ever accomplished. "Christ dieth no more : death hath no more dominion over Him; for in that he died, he died unto Sin once, but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God." From this view of our Saviour—dying *once* for all, and thenceforth *glorified for ever*—St. Paul draws a plain, but striking inference. Exactly so should the faithful follower of Christ, once dead unto sin, live no longer therein; but continue in a life of righteousness : once risen, he should sin no more ; but walk, in newness of life, towards the gate of heaven ; having new views, new powers, new hopes, new fears : his love and hate—his wishes and aversions—his cares and pleasures—severally taking a new direction : Himself a *new Creature*<sup>1</sup>,—dead to the evils of the world—to its allurements ; to its miseries ; dead also to the evil of his own heart : but alive unto God, through Jesus Christ.

## III.

If thus, by God's grace, we walk in newness of life, we may rejoice in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, not only as thereby we know the price of our redemption to have been accepted by the Father, but as the *Redeemer's* resurrection is an earnest of *our own*. "Christ is risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept<sup>2</sup>. By man

<sup>1</sup> Collect for the Sunday after Christmas.

<sup>2</sup> Under the Levitical law, the whole crop of corn was sanctified



“came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead.” It is not more sure that the Son of Man did suffer death, than that he rose from the dead. “In Adam all die”—What sincere Christian does not feelingly allow this mournful truth! not only as his body must yield to death, but as he deeply laments that *natural* proneness to evil in his own heart; which, unless corrected by the Spirit of God, constitutes *spiritual death*. What however, if, as children of the *first* Adam, we *die*? All, who are born again in Jesus Christ, the second Adam, shall be made alive—alive to a spiritual life of righteousness here, and hereafter raised from corruption to incorruption, from mortality to immortality—from the grave to glory—partakers of life eternal.

#### COLLECT.

The resurrection, which we this day celebrate, being thus the confirmation of our faith, and the foundation of our hope, we proceed with more than usual earnestness to the contemplation of the *fact* itself, and of the *evidence* by which its truth is supported.

In the record delivered to us in St. Matthew’s Gospel<sup>1</sup>, we find not only the direct testimony of the disciples and brethren, but also the collateral and unwilling testimony of enemies; whose account of the transaction is of itself sufficient proof, that He, who, as the Messiah, died and was buried, did, as

by offering the first fruits—so by the offering of Jesus Christ, and God’s acceptance of the offering, the whole number of the Redeemed are sanctified and blessed. Lev. xxiii. 9, 10.

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xxviii. 2.

the Messiah, rise again. For when from the military watch placed at the sepulchre, the chief priests and assembled elders learned “*all* the things that were “done”—that the earth did quake greatly; that in the earthquake an angel had descended, and “rolled “away the stone from the door, and sat upon it”—they were utterly confounded: they could not disbelieve what was asserted by so many competent witnesses; especially as those witnesses were enemies to Christ: they therefore had recourse to the dreadful expedient of a lie. It happened indeed with them, as it often happens with others, that the falsehood confuted itself; and thereby defeated the object it was intended to promote. “They gave large “money to the soldiers, saying, say ye—His disciples came by night, and stole him away, while “we slept<sup>1</sup>.” Now if this account had been true, there had been no necessity for the “large money,” given as a bribe. Truth never fears detection, nor takes indirect means to gain itself credit. But the account is altogether incredible. The military guard set over the tomb, after it had been sealed with an official seal<sup>2</sup>, amounted to sixty in number: *some* of whom were always absolutely *watching*, and *all* of them were *answerable* for a due discharge of their duty. Besides, so strict was Roman discipline, that if a soldier appointed to watch, slept on his post, he was condemned to death. It is therefore hardly possible that the whole number on duty should be asleep together; and if only one was awake—armed as he would be, and trained to service—he would

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xxviii. 12.<sup>2</sup> Matt. xxvii. 66.

not have permitted an unarmed company of quiet disciples to disturb the grave : to the compromise of his duty, if not to the hazard of his life. But suppose *all* the soldiers were *asleep*—the falsehood *then* stands still more conspicuously *self-confuted*. How could men, who were asleep, tell when their charge was removed, or who removed it, whether disciples or strangers, friends or enemies ? This statement is not to be charged with partiality, because given by the Evangelist : He appeals to the Jews themselves for the truth of it ; and declares, that “ this saying is “ commonly reported among the Jews, to this day<sup>1</sup>.”

With what gratitude then should we acknowledge the merciful loving-kindness of our Heavenly Father, who affords the *plainest* testimony of the most *important* truths ; and has given such clear evidence of the fact of our Saviour’s resurrection, that the *unlearned*, as well as the learned, may understand its nature, and feel its power ! They find, on most convincing testimony, that Jesus Christ, by rising from the dead, hath proved himself to be God—his authority to be divine ; and his religion true. Sincere therefore in our reception of his doctrines, and obedient to the word of his commandments, let us go on our way, rejoicing : for if we be *faithful* to Him, we shall be *glorified* with Him—since He, who for our sake did die ; did for our sake also “ overcome “ death, and open unto us the gate of everlasting “ life.”

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xxviii. 15.

## MONDAY IN EASTER WEEK.

A HOLY joy may well be entertained beyond the immediate occasion which gives rise to it.

Our Church therefore has directed appropriate services for the Monday and Tuesday following Easter-day; and appointed the Sunday Collect to be used upon each of these days. Of this Collect, the *first* part only has yet employed our meditations; leading our thoughts to the confirmed fact of the resurrection of Jesus Christ: through whom Almighty God hath “overcome death, and opened unto us the “gate of everlasting life.”

Animated by the prospect thus opened unto us, we long to be with Christ—and enter into our rest. “As the hart desireth the water-brooks, so long our “souls after thee, O God<sup>1</sup>”—they long to enter into thine abodes of blessedness. But strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth thither—*few* there be that find it—still *fewer*, who, having found it, *keep* it. We therefore pray for *thy* help, which alone can give us the will, or the power, to walk in the path of life. “We humbly beseech thee, that as by “thy *special* grace preventing us, thou dost put into “our minds good *desires*; so, by thy continual help, “we may bring the same to good effect.”

The grace of God is here called his “special “grace,” not because He respects the person of man, and would favour one supplicant more than another—“God’s ways are equal<sup>2</sup>” to all men—but

<sup>1</sup> Psalm xlii. 1. Prayer Book version.

<sup>2</sup> Ezek. xviii. 25.

it is his *special* grace, because it is the very spring which gives being and action to spiritual life. *Without* it—as the continual corrective of the erring principle of our nature—we could not be in a fit state for even a conditional salvation: *without* it, “whosoever liveth, is counted dead before God.” It is a term of *pre-eminence* as to the gift; *not* of *partiality* as to the receivers of it<sup>1</sup>.

The feeling of the suppliant is this: “I am conscious of so much *natural* corruption of heart—in *affections*, set upon the earth rather than on heaven: in *fears*, which have the world for their object, and not God: in *hopes*, which make for time, not for eternity: above all, in *self-will*, which

<sup>1</sup> Thus in our Church Catechism, the young Christian is taught that he cannot serve God “without his *special* grace; which he must learn at all times to call for by diligent prayer.”

Now it is evident that the term—“*special*”—in the Catechism, as well as in the Collect, is used to signify, that such grace is so necessary—so absolutely indispensable for the support of that new, or spiritual life, into which the Gospel admits us—that, without it, all other means of support must fail. “*Special*” as to its universal *necessity* and *power*; not as to its preference of objects.

So beautifully does our Liturgy harmonize with the doctrine of the Apostle—“The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God,” saith St. Paul, 1 Cor. ii. 14. The grace of God is *special*—peculiarly—necessary to enable him to discern them; saith our Church. And this grace is free to all who pray for it. “I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that He (the Comforter) may abide with you for *ever*.” John xiv. 16. Now this promise was made to Christ’s disciples, not only in their individual character, as his servants, but in their pre-eminent station, as the representatives of his Church. Therefore the promise is applicable to each individual member of the universal Church of Christ—and will continue to be so applicable till time shall be no longer.



“ with sturdy sullenness, is set against the will of  
“ God—that if on occasions which try my faith and  
“ obedience, any better thoughts arise; if my affec-  
“ tions, my fears, my hopes, my will, can gradually  
“ be brought into dependence upon God; *then* is it  
“ evident, that I have *help*—that there is exerted in  
“ my favour, an influence, altogether superior to my  
“ nature—an influence, which is offered to every  
“ man who asks for it, as a covenanted child of  
“ God<sup>1</sup>.” This is the reasoning of St. Paul; when  
he declares that “ the Spirit itself beareth witness  
“ with our spirit that we are the children of God.”  
Whenever we desire for ourselves holiness, rather  
than greatness; and the favour of God, rather than  
the smiles of the world—when for others we can  
desire success, in return for their envy; good, for  
their ill-will; and blessing, for their cursing—we  
desire things from which our nature is averse. Such  
desires are *then* the fruits, *not* of the *flesh*, but of the  
*Spirit*. But even these good desires will wither, and  
in time of temptation fall away, unless they be con-  
tinually fostered and sustained by the influence which  
put them into our minds. Daily renovation is ne-  
cessary, even for those, who, by the laver of regene-  
ration in baptism, have been received as adopted  
children of God. If good desires come by *prevent-*  
*ing* grace—they can be brought to good effect only  
by *abiding* grace. Thus we are most humbled,  
when our desires are most high-set—the higher we  
rise above the world, the more we depend upon  
heavenly aid for support! The more nearly we live

<sup>1</sup> Matt. vii. 7, 8.

to God—the more entirely must we be led, supported, guided, and sanctified by his Spirit: the more earnestly therefore should we adopt the humbling language of this Collect, and pray for that gracious aid, which is necessary, both to give good desires, and to bring the same good effect <sup>1</sup>.

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## TUESDAY IN EASTER WEEK.

THAT our petitions may not be in vain, they are presented through Jesus Christ; who can render the humblest offering acceptable, and the weakest prayer available. Our plea moreover is now strengthened: we plead the *power* as well as the mercy of our Advocate. He is risen not to life only, but to power—He not only *liveth* for ever, but *reigneth* for ever with the Father and the Holy Ghost, ever one God; world without end.

To what a conclusion have our meditations led us! We find a Redeemer, whose power and love are alike infinite. He, who gave proof of his *love* by dying upon the cross, has given equal proof of his *power* by rising from the dead. By dying he

<sup>1</sup> This truth is applicable to us even in our intercourse with mankind. In proportion as we set our affections on things above, we rise superior to things of this world—to its hopes and its fears, its contempt and its honours; and are thus enabled to bear with a brave mind and forgiving spirit, the malice of enmity, the insincerity of friendship, and all those various trials which perplex social life. The world passeth away, and the fashion thereof; but the promises of God endure for ever.

saved our souls from death; by rising again, he hath made known the path of life, and opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers.

“Why art thou so cast down, O my soul—and “why art thou so disquieted within me?” Thy Saviour is the Lord of heaven and earth. Clouds may gather—storms may assail—sickness, and sorrow, and distress, or death may overtake thee. Yet fear not. Cast thy care upon God—thy Father, thy Redeemer, thy Sanctifier! He—the Lord of all—is with thee still. In all time of thy tribulation, in the hour of death, and in the day of judgment, he will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. What though the angel of wrath closed the gate of an earthly paradise! Lo! the angel of reconciliation hath opened the gate of a heavenly paradise! *There*, the spirits of the blessed—rejoicing to be again united to all they held dear in social life—shall hear the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden<sup>1</sup>; shall hear and *not* be afraid: for they will be clothed in the robe of the righteousness of Christ; and, being so clothed, will fear neither sin, nor evil more<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Gen. iii. 10.

<sup>2</sup> It is no dreaming fancy to expect, that in *another* world we shall preserve our identity—shall know and be known even as in *this*. When mention is made of the Patriarchs as living now in the land of rest, they are not only referred to as blessed spirits, but specified in their known and usual individuality: as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. In the parable of Dives and Lazarus, they and Abraham are known severally the one to the other. When our blessed Lord was transfigured, Moses and Elias appeared in their identity. And though of the mode by which glorified spirits are thus enabled or permitted to bear their proper forms and appearance, it were vain to attempt an explanation—for it is amongst the numberless mysteries which our darkened sight cannot penetrate—the truth is too

Strong then is my salvation ! Strong be my faith in it ! *I* must die ; and those I love must die. But

comforting, not to be cherished with that humility, which must ever temper our anticipation of the “glories that must be revealed in “us.”

Let the mourner in Sion continue “patient in well doing ;” looking for and hasting to the coming of the Lord, when shall begin the reunion of kindred spirits, whom in this world death had separated. Parent to child, sister to brother, husband to wife, friend to friend, shall then be restored—a blessed communion of saints, whom nor sin nor sorrow shall sever more. If here to walk in the house of God as friends, and take sweet counsel together, rejoicing in the mercies of God, strengthening each other to submission under the correcting hand of God, and confirming the one the other in a course of holy perseverance through this pilgrimage—if such union of object and pursuit, be as a sweet balm to the weary Christian during his sojourn in this wilderness of life ; if when death hath severed their bond of union, even the remembrance of past affection can give its share of consolation ; how will he rejoice, when in the resurrection he is called to a perfect service of the same God in the land of promise, and with the blessed spirits of those whom here he mourned, be admitted to the eternal communion of saints ; and with angels and archangels and all the company of heaven, sing night and day unceasing praises to the Lamb of God, worthy to receive honour and glory as the victorious king of a redeemed creation.

Finding that some condescend to read this work, to whom the examples and the writings of the wise of all ages are familiar, I cannot forbear here noticing a remarkable passage in the writings of Cicero\*, where, speaking in the character of the elder Cato, he seems animated by a transporting vision of the assembly of just men made perfect. Longing to be freed from this anxious state of being, and to be reunited with the spirits of the noble and the virtuous ; the friends whom he had loved, and the wise whom he had honoured ; Cato is supposed thus to express his anticipations. “O glorious day, when I shall journey to that divine beatified assembly, and leave behind me the dregs and turmoil of this lower world ! for I shall journey not only to those men of whom I have already spoken—but to my Cato also †.”—“I performed indeed

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\* De Senect.

† He alludes to the death of his son.

Christ is risen from the dead ; the first fruits of them that slept : and whosoever *truly* “ believeth in him, “ shall *live*, though he die.” Hence my hope of meeting my beloved kindred and friends in another and a better world—where the wicked cease from troubling ; where the weary are at rest ; and where, with a glorified body, and a purified soul, I may hope to live for ever with the Lord ; “ in whose presence is fulness of joy, and at whose right hand “ there are pleasures for evermore.”

If ever in the dark day of sorrow, my faith shrinketh, or my hope faileth—I will consider the glorious power of my Saviour. I will contemplate him—no longer the meek, the lowly, the man of sorrow, acquainted with grief, the poor despised Jesus—but the mighty one of Israel, riding in the glory of his strength ; mighty to conquer—mightier to save ; glorious in triumph—more glorious in mercy. I will know him—and love him—and serve him—and trust in him—as the Christ—the Anointed—the everlasting King ; “ the Lord of all : ” “ who liveth and “ reigneth with the Father and the Holy Ghost, ever “ one God ; world without end.”

“ for him the last offices of life, which he had better have performed “ for me. Yet his spirit, not forsaking me, but wistfully looking “ back upon me, hath passed to those abodes, whither he perceived “ that I also was to arrive. A loss this, which I have borne bravely ; “ not because I was patient under it—but because I consoled myself “ with the reflection, that no long interval would separate us.”



## 34. FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

*ALMIGHTY Father, who hast given thine only Son to die for our sins, and to rise again for our justification ; grant us so to put away the leaven of malice and wickedness, that we may always serve thee in pureness of living and truth, through the merits of the same thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

THIS Sunday was anciently called Low Sunday ; because the Easter solemnities were continued to this day : constituting a feast of *lower* degree than the feast of Easter. Its appointed Collect is particularly appropriate.

The Christian, rejoicing in the Redeemer's triumph, addresses his Collect for the first time to God, as "*Almighty Father.*" The circumstances of the season remind him of his privilege, and he approaches the throne of grace, as a child restored to his father's love. It was to effect this reconciliation, that divine love was so transcendently displayed: the Father sparing not his Son Jesus Christ, but giving him as a sacrifice for a lost world—and the Son, dying for our sins, and rising again for our justification.

That he died for sin, we know to our joy. If we have sinned, and thereby experience heaviness of soul, with deep contrition for our offences, we are not to sorrow as men without hope: "Christ  
" hath died, and become the propitiation for our

“ sins : and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world <sup>1</sup>.” Now it is *sin*, which *separates* from God. Christ, therefore, who removes sin, removes the separation ; brings us *near* to God, and so, with strict propriety, is said to propitiate God for us <sup>2</sup>.

Our joy however were incomplete, had the Saviour remained in his grave. Having died for our sins, he rose again for our justification. By rising from the dead, he shewed, that in all things having been obedient, even to the law of death, he had effected, completely, conditional salvation for man. He therefore *justly* claimed the promised recompence of reward—claimed for mankind, through *himself*, and for *his own* sake, not only pardon, but peace—not only freedom from everlasting punishment, but a

<sup>1</sup> 1 John ii. 2. “ For the sins of the *whole world*,”—that is—such is the perfection of Christ’s atonement, that it is sufficient for the sins of *all* who accept the benefit of redemption, upon the *conditions* on which it is offered. That any man fails of sharing this sufficiency, arises, not from any imperfection in the atonement, but from the rejection of its conditions by the hardened and impenitent sinner. In this view of the crucified Saviour, Isaiah uses a qualified term, and observes that the Redeemer bare “ the sin of *many*.” Isaiah liii. 12. And Jesus himself declares, in a tone of pointed admonition, that his blood is “ shed for *many*, for the remission of sins :” Matt. xxvi. 28. *not* himself making either distinction as to condition, or limitation as to numbers ; *not* himself excluding any—Jew or Gentile, bond or free ; but warning us, that *some* would *exclude themselves*. And men *do* exclude themselves when they continue in sin ; when they disprove the sincerity of their faith, by disobedience to those Scriptures, which if they contain the promise of universal redemption, contain also, most explicitly, the terms on which that redemption is offered ; and assert its whole character as conditional.

<sup>2</sup> The word propitiate means to “ bring near, for the purpose of “ reconciliation.”

*just* and well-founded title to an inheritance in heaven.

See now the extent and value of this justification ! whereby the faithful and contrite stand justified, through Jesus Christ, even before a heart-searching God—No unrighteousness is imputed to them. You could not justify *yourself*, even as deserving *pardon* : still *less* could you so justify yourself, as to claim *reward* ; either for the exercise of your Christian graces, or for repentance upon the neglect of them : when, Lo ! so entirely has the triumphant and glorified Saviour justified you, that for *his* sake, you are commanded to look forward to such good things as pass man's understanding—even the joys of a blessed immortality.

Have we this *Hope* ?—What manner of persons ought we to be in all *holy conversation*—how earnestly should we pray God to “grant us so to put “away the *leaven* of malice and wickedness, that “we may always serve him in pureness of living “and truth !”

*Leaven* changes the character of any thing to which it is applied. The word is used sometimes in a *good* sense ; as when our Lord says “the “kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven<sup>1</sup> :” sometimes in a *bad* sense ; “take heed, and beware of “the leaven of the Scribes and Pharisees<sup>2</sup>.” In the *Collect*, it is used in a bad sense : we therefore pray for grace “to put it away.” As leaven agitates the meal, so malice agitates the heart ; and works in it all manner of evil. The leaven of *malice* stirs

<sup>1</sup> Matth. xiii. 33.

<sup>2</sup> Matth. xvi. 6.

up envy, wrath, hatred, and uncharitableness : causing us to offend against our *neighbour*. The leaven of *wickedness*—puffing us up with pride, and all unseemliness, encouraging lofty imaginations, and delivering us over to the service of the devil—sets us in array against *God*.

All this leaven must be put away, if we would serve the Lord “in pureness of living and truth.” We cannot serve God and mammon at the same time. The Gospel cannot blend with worldliness,—“No man putteth a piece of new cloth unto an “old garment<sup>1</sup>.” The heart must be *new*. The Son of God—who died for the sins of all men, and rose again to justify all—died and rose again in vain for *us*, unless we fulfil the *conditions* on which salvation is offered as a free gift to all : and these conditions are, that we “put off evil and corrupt “affections, and daily proceed in all virtue and “godliness of living.” As is the master, so must be the servant. “Be *ye* perfect, even as your “Father, which is in heaven is perfect<sup>1</sup>.” From pureness of living before God, will spring truth—singleness of heart—in our dealings with men. A virtue this, which of all the *social* virtues, is perhaps most seldom met with. How rarely are mankind perfectly sincere in their mutual intercourse ! Indeed, the mind is so apt, by *nature*, to be influenced by mixed motives, that our only sure guide from error, is a *religious* principle ; which will lead us to act towards our fellow-creatures, as being under the all-searching eye of ONE—who is a God of truth,

<sup>3</sup> Matth. ix. 16.

<sup>1</sup> Matt. v. 48.

and whom we cannot deceive. Are ye then, justly perhaps, offended with any? Be ye angry—yet *sin not*. Strive to conquer your anger: at any rate, do not, with worse than pharisaical hypocrisy, proffer words of kindness, having war in your hearts. Be open in expressing just displeasure—and express it in the spirit of brotherly-kindness. “If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him;” but yet in the spirit of kindness; and “if he repent, forgive him<sup>1</sup>.” Religion, so far from allowing a concealment of our disapprobation of what is wrong, rather demands an open avowal of it. How much misery might be avoided in social life, if men would leave off the habit of pretending kindness which they do not feel, and concealing disapprobation which they cannot but cherish! This insincerity is not less mean in its principle than injurious in its consequences. A real Christian, therefore, both abhors it as evil, and shuns it as degrading. Again—have ye offended others? Let not the leaven of hypocrisy stir you up to false or frivolous excuses. In singleness of heart confess your offences. In sincerity offer to make amends. This is to put away the destructive leaven—This is to serve the Lord, by doing unto others as you would they should do unto you; living with your neighbour, as with your God, in sincerity and truth.

<sup>1</sup> Luke xvii. 3.



## 35. SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

*ALMIGHTY God, who hast given thine only Son to be unto us both a sacrifice for sin, and also an ensample of godly life; give us grace that we may always most thankfully receive that his inestimable benefit, and also daily endeavour ourselves to follow the blessed steps of his most holy life, through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

WHEN Saint Paul would expose the absurdity of a relaxation in moral conduct, because salvation is by *faith*, he opens his argument in the way of a question; not as supposing a doubtful answer, but to arrest the attention, and claim for his reply a more marked regard. “Shall we continue in sin, “that grace may abound? God forbid<sup>1</sup>!”

Thus, in the Collect before us, Christian holiness is represented as *so* inseparable from Christian profession, that the example of the Redeemer himself is held out for his redeemed to imitate. If we thankfully receive the inestimable benefit of salvation through him, who “was given to be unto us a sacrifice for sin;” no fairer proof can be required of the unfeigned sincerity of our thankfulness, than to consider him also as “an ensample of godly life.” Indeed to contemplate great and good men, with a view to imitate them, has ever been the delight of virtuous minds; and the higher the stamp of excel-

<sup>1</sup> Rom. vi. 1.

lence, which marks the man, the more advantageous is the study of his character. We cannot *aim* too high. The higher our aim, the higher our attainment. Upon this principle is founded the apostle's exhortation that we "go on unto perfection<sup>1</sup>." Not that we can reach *absolute* perfection; but we are expected to reach that *moral* or possible perfection, which consists in doing our best to fulfil the law of God, and so to "serve him in sincerity and truth," that the meritorious perfection of our Redeemer may be mercifully considered and accepted as our own. We therefore endeavour, by divine assistance, to imitate Jesus Christ, in his *obedience*; and in the exercise of those graces with which it was attended.

At every period of his age and in every circumstance of his life, the Son of God was obedient.

Whilst a child, he continued subject unto his parents. What a beautiful example this to children! If the Son of God was so completely dutiful and obedient to his earthly parents, that he was *subject* unto them; how much more ought ye,—little children—to be in all things dutiful and obedient to *your* parents. You are indebted to them for all you have, and all you know. Think with what anxiety they watched over you in infancy, day and night, during those tender years when you were not aware who nursed you, who fed you, who clothed you. Think how often they now deprive themselves of many enjoyments and comforts, that you may have food and clothing and education, and may be trained up to useful and honourable employments. You can

<sup>1</sup> Heb. vi. 1.

never be too grateful to them for all their care of you, and all their self-denial for your sake. The best and only return you can make to them, is to be religious and obedient; to love their society, to rejoice in making them happy by your good conduct, to be diligent in your studies, and to “remember your Creator in the days of your youth<sup>1</sup>.” How delightful is the reflection that thus you will please your *heavenly* Father, and make your parents happy. Bad children make their parents wretched, and bring down their grey hairs with sorrow to the grave—a “foolish son” saith Solomon “is the heaviness of his mother;” but a good child is the delight, the joy, the consolation both of father and mother—for “a *wise son* maketh a *glad father*<sup>2</sup>.” Consider too what *encouragement* you have to love and honour them! *God* will *bless* you in your dutiful behaviour, as he blessed our Saviour; and will give you grace, that *you* also may grow up, as did the child Jesus, “increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man<sup>3</sup>.”

<sup>1</sup> Eccles. xii. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Prov. x. 1.

<sup>3</sup> When engaged in his ministry\*, as the founder of the Gospel Kingdom, how continually was Christ referring to obedience, as his principle of action! Was it necessary to strengthen his fortitude in the hour of trial? the consideration, that his object was to do the will of God, supplied the strength needed. “Let this cup pass from me, nevertheless, *not as I will, but as thou wilt*†.” When he would reconcile his disciples to the various indignities heaped upon him, and to his own unceasing, uncomplaining endurance of them,

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\* Jesus Christ entered upon his ministry at the age of 30; and was engaged in it till his death at the age of 33.

† Matt. xxvi. 39.

The spirit of obedience *never* forsook the Redeemer. It was the master-spring of all his motives—and the controller of all his actions. It was this, which rendered him courageous in danger—meek under provocation—and resigned to death, even when forsaken of his Father and his God<sup>1</sup>.

Throughout the rich stores of historical record, where shall we look for heroic courage like *this*? Many heroes have bravely died. They however have chiefly fallen amid the din of arms; or have been supported in the severity of trial by the excitement of applauding friends; or, if a few instances are found of great and wise men, yielding themselves calmly and sedately to the unjust sentence of mis-

he reminded them that “the Scriptures must be fulfilled \*.” “I came down from heaven *not* to do *mine own* will, but the will of him that sent me †.” “My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work ‡.” He reminds us that the same obedience is expected from *us*. “Not every man that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven §.” He also teaches us that a sure mode of convincing ourselves that the doctrine of his gospel is from God, is to “do the will of God ||.” “The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God ¶.” And he encourages us by the endearing promise, that our obedience to the will of God shall unite us to himself by an affection and love so comprehensive, as to embrace all the sweet charities of social life—“Whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother \*\*.”

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xxvii. 46. “My God, my God, why hast *thou* forsaken me.” See the note upon this passage, page 122.

\* Mark xiv. 49.

† John vi. 38.

‡ Ibid. iv. 34.

§ Matt. vii. 21.

|| John vii. 17.

¶ Rom. viii. 16.

\*\* Matt. xii. 50.

guided counsels ; let it be remembered—that *they could not* have *avoided* death. What therefore was inevitable, they braced their minds to bear : with a dignity indeed, which justly claims its meed of praise, but which was yet sustained by a necessity which allowed no compromise. Even the noble army of martyrs, who in the strength of Christian faith and Christian virtue, suffered a death, which in *some* instances they *might* have avoided, were yet generally powerless to subdue their foes ; or even escape them, except by the sacrifice of conscience. Whereas with a crucified Jesus, our Redeemer, the case was different. *He*, with a breath, could have swept away his foes. He *chose* to contend, *alone*, against mocking, and insult, and death. “ Thinkest “ thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and “ he shall presently give me more than twelve legions “ of angels ? But how then shall the Scriptures be “ fulfilled, that thus it must be <sup>1</sup> ? ” *alone* therefore he contended—and *alone* he triumphed ; sustained by the spirit of *obedience* !

Imitating his example, let us take heed, that our imitation be not a mere *act*, but a *habit*. Let us “ endeavour *daily* to follow the steps of his most “ holy life.” This holiness will be the necessary consequence of obedience. *He* came down from heaven to do his Father’s will : and we are placed upon earth to do the will of the *same*, *our* heavenly Father. What if our trials be hard ! our Saviour’s were harder <sup>2</sup>. He obeyed unto death. So likewise

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xxvi. 53 and 54.

<sup>2</sup> Is our lot poor ? He was poor and forsaken, a man of sorrow, whose portion was tribulation. Is our good evil spoken of ? Are



our obedience must be unlimited—unreserved. His reward was heaven: heaven also will be the reward of those who follow him—he hath “gone to prepare a place” for them<sup>1</sup>. Be it our daily care, that his work of mercy be not undertaken in vain for *us*.

our actions misrepresented and our motives maligned? His most benevolent and divine actions were ascribed, by a strange and self-convicting inconsistency, to the very spirit of evil\*. Do enemies of malice persecute us? He was the object of persecution itself. Does the insincerity of friendship mock our misplaced confidence, and so betray us to the evils of an excited pride, and a mortified spirit? He was betrayed by the friend who had “dipped with him in the dish;” and betrayed to the fury of an enraged multitude, who sought his life; but he continued still the meek and lowly Jesus. Are we called to give proof of our obedience by “a crucifixion” of our hearts†—mortifying every unworthy feeling—receiving injury, yet not revengeful; bearing undeserved contempt, yet not impatient; calumniated, yet resigned? He is our example. He was calumniated; he was despised; he was despitefully used; yet did he bear all, because so he obeyed his Father’s Will. In a word, he has left in his own example of suffering a perfect pattern of obedience; and he expects you to follow it—“if any man will come after me, let him take up his cross *daily*.”

<sup>1</sup> John xiv. 2.

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\* Matt. ix. 34. “But the Pharisees said, he casteth out devils through the prince of the devils.” See comment on the 5th Sunday after Easter; Note.

† Gal. ii. 20. “I am crucified with Christ,” and vi. 14. “By whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.”

### 36. THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

*ALMIGHTY God, who shewest to them that be in error the light of thy truth, to the intent that they may return into the way of righteousness; grant unto all them that are admitted into the fellowship of Christ's Religion, that they may eschew those things that are contrary to their profession, and follow all such things as are agreeable to the same, through our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.*

It is not an unusual inconsistency for the same person to indulge a hope of being *saved* by the *mercy* of God, who yet lives in a careless *disregard* of the *commandments* of God.

This Collect is admirably adapted to expose so dangerous a delusion, and to shew clearly the ground of Christian hope. It reminds us, that when the *Father* sent the *Son* to be the light of the world, he had in view the restoration of the fallen sons of Adam to their original state of happiness, by enabling them to return unto their original state of righteousness.

The happiness of Adam was dependent upon his righteousness. When he came from the hand of his Creator, he was happy; because there was no unrighteousness in him. He was stamped with the image of God. He walked with God: the creature with his Creator; the *one* causing no terror, the other feeling no shame. But when he ceased to be obedient, he ceased to be happy. His confession,

that he fled in fear upon hearing “the voice of the “ Lord God walking in the garden,” evidently betrayed a new feeling, arising from the new situation in which he had placed himself. Paradise—so lately the scene of *happy* intercourse with man, and angels, and God—was become a scene of shame and misery, terror and dismay. Angels were still there; and God was there: but *guilt* was also there, and the guilty conscience anticipated the just wrath of God; and saw in the angels, only ministering spirits of vengeance: whilst memory too faithfully recalled the awful threatening, “In the day thou eatest, “thou shalt die.” Having forsaken the path of righteousness, man no longer was found in the path of peace. He could no longer derive comfort from the presence of a God, whose threats he had perversely disbelieved, whose commands he had wilfully disobeyed, and whose Fatherly authority he had basely dishonoured—serving the creature more than the Creator.

That *we*—the sons of fallen Adam—are, like *him* after his disobedience, far gone from original righteousness, is sufficiently proved by the impossibility of our attaining that happiness for which man was created, till we be restored as the sons of God.

To effect this restoration—to give to an erring world the means of returning from their wanderings—Almighty God hath “shewn to them the light of “his truth,” by Jesus Christ. And where is the Christian who does not find the Gospel to be, what the Holy Scriptures so often represent it, “a lantern “unto his feet and a light unto his paths<sup>1</sup>?”—a light

<sup>1</sup> Psalm cxix. 105.

to his heart and understanding, enabling him to discern good from evil; to see where danger lies, and choose the path of safety. All we know of the most important truths, and all we hope as to our highest interests, is derived from this light. It ever shines to sanctify, to instruct, to comfort us. When doubts arise in our minds as to what is our line of duty towards either God or man, or when difficulties present themselves to us in our pursuit of it, the Gospel removes them; and either by the precepts it has laid down, or the examples which it has recorded, instructs us how to proceed safely. When sorrows compass us, it gives consolation and support. In our sickness it leads us to God, as a Father who chasteneth, because he loveth us. In our worldly disappointments it unveils the merciful purpose of the Almighty, who by afflictive providences would wean us from the world, and attach us more and more closely to himself. Under grief at the death of friends, it sustains and consoles us with the certainty of the resurrection of the body, and a re-union of the blessed <sup>1</sup>. In the prospect of our own death,

<sup>1</sup> The doctrine of the resurrection of the *body*, was a truth which the wisdom of the best and wisest heathens never reached. It was to *them* a doctrine, hidden. Clouds and darkness rested upon it. They were aware\* that the *shades*, or *spirits* of men would pass to another world; and there, know, and be known: but the gospel alone has revealed to men, that their bodies, having been first raised from the dust by the last trumpet-call, and “fashioned, like unto “Christ’s glorious body†,” shall one day be reunited each to its kindred spirit—corruption clothed with incorruption, and mortal with immortality. And not only does the light of the gospel open

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\* Refer to note page 172.

† Phil. iii. 21.

we may humbly hope that its light will become more vivid—and unfold in still brighter form the blissful prospect of a better world, and ere we leave this earth, give to the eye of faith some glimpse of the glories of that heaven, where remaineth a rest to the people of God<sup>1</sup>.

With what care and diligence should we “walk  
“as children of light,” in all holy conversation;

this wonderful and animating prospect, but the Son of God, by himself rising from the dead, hath for ever proved its reality. Hence our expectation of this glorious change is no visionary dream of the imagination; but a blessed and substantial truth: so firm, so enduring, that upon it, as upon the rock of ages, we build our hope of angel-habitations, and fear no shock from the storms and tempests of the world. The rain may descend, and the floods arise, and the wind beat upon us, but we shall not be moved from our hope, because *we are founded upon a rock* \*.

<sup>1</sup> It was a prevailing notion among the wise of the heathen, that at the approach of death, the soul, when not subdued by any unusual force of disease, gained a nearer though partial view of that spiritual world, upon which it was preparing to enter. This opinion seems to gain confirmation as well from revelation as from reason. Angels are represented as tending the beggar Lazarus in his death, and bearing his freed spirit into Abraham's bosom †. The dying Stephen, even ere life had failed, saw the glories of the spiritual world ‡. And though the same extent of glory be not vouchsafed now to the dying Christian, as once to the dying Stephen, nor angel bands be *seen* by us around the bed of death; yet a *sufficient* earnest of their heavenly inheritance is mercifully vouchsafed to the dying spirits of all “who die in the Lord!” What indeed is their unsubdued patience, their unshaken faith, their unclouded hope, but evidences that they have more than human aid, and are sustained by more than human consolation.

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\* Matt. vii. 25.

† Luke xvi. 22.

‡ Acts vii. 55.



true and just in all our dealings with men, pure and upright before God: for otherwise the light that is in us is darkness—and then “how great, how “awful is that darkness<sup>1</sup>.” With what sincerity should we—who are from our infancy admitted into Christ’s religion—pray for grace, “to eschew those “things which are contrary to our profession, and “follow all such things as are agreeable to the “same.” If we do not eschew, or put away things contrary to our profession, we defeat the very object which a merciful God had in view, in giving his Son to be both a sacrifice for sin, and also an ensample of godly life. The gift was intended to bring us back to happiness, by enabling us to follow “all “such things as are agreeable to our profession.” And whoso is religious in *deed* and in *truth*, finds, that, though by nature born in sin, and the child of wrath, he is by his Christian covenant, so renewed as a child of grace, that he walks with God, even in the wilderness of life; conscious of no terror from the Divine presence, for he knows himself to be reconciled by the blood of Christ, accepted through his intercession, and clothed with his righteousness. He walks as becometh the children of light.

Thus he is on every side encouraged to come boldly to the throne of grace, with the hope of gaining strength for the high duties of his calling: till at length, guided, strengthened, and comforted by “the *light* of truth,” and going on from strength to strength, he is enabled to lead a new life—ceasing to do evil, learning to do well, and seeking both

<sup>1</sup> Matth. vi. 23.

peace here and happiness hereafter, *not* from the pleasures, or the riches, or the power of the world, but from the pursuit of whatsoever things are true—whatsoever things are honest—whatsoever things are just—whatsoever things are pure—whatsoever things are “agreeable to his profession,” as a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor—O that we *may all* be inheritors!—of the kingdom of heaven.

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### 37. FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

*O ALMIGHTY God, who alone canst order the unruly wills and affections of sinful men; grant unto thy people, that they may love the thing which thou commandest, and desire that which thou dost promise; that so among the sundry and manifold changes of the world, our hearts may surely there be fixed, where true joys are to be found, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

AN attentive consideration of the ways of God with man, from the earliest ages of the world, confirms the propriety of our application to Him, as the GREAT BEING, who “alone can order the “unruly wills and affections of sinful men.” Wonderful indeed is the manner, in which the conflicting passions of mankind have been made to work the will of God, in bringing about salvation for his people, and thereby exalting his glory: the very

means used to defeat the end in view, being so over-ruled, that they became the means of its accomplishment <sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> How wonderfully is this truth proved by the successive rise and fall of the four great empires of the world—the Assyrian, or Babylonian; the Medo-Persian; the Grecian; and the Roman—prophesied of in the seventh chapter of the Book of the Prophet Daniel!

These four kingdoms were appointed to succeed each other at a time when no human wisdom could have foreseen such events; and the rise of the three last was predicted, when Nebuchadnezzar was reigning over Babylon in all the insolence of successful ambition. Fearing neither God nor man, but vaunting the height of his power, and anticipating neither humiliation nor change, he boldly referred to his own glory the elevation of the empire on which he was placed; —“The king spake, and said, is not this great Babylon, that I have “built for the house of the kingdom, by the might of *my* power, and “for the honour of *my* majesty \*?” But the might of his power was soon withered, and the honour of his majesty overthrown. His kingdom passed from him. So likewise the other changes predicted by Daniel were in due course of time brought about; proving that all events are under the directing though invisible control of the God of Daniel—the supreme moral Governor of the universe.

It may be thought, that Cyrus the Medo-Persian, without any peculiar divine appointment thereto, might have conquered Babylon; and with a view of aggrandizing his fame, and signalizing himself in the eye of the world by an ostentation of benevolence, might have led back the captive sons of Judah to their land, and built again her temple for Jerusalem. Thus too it may seem to have required no extraordinary influence from heaven to render Alexander the conqueror of the world. Intrepid, and skilful, and fortunate—he may be considered as not having passed the usual course of human events in establishing himself the founder of the Grecian empire. The Romans also, in their turn, and without any peculiar interference might seem, as a fourth empire, only to have exemplified the mortifying truth, that “all is vanity;” all is fluctuating; all changing. But how came it to pass, that these changes took place in the exact order, and at the exact time previously appointed to them by the prophet?

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\* Daniel iv. 30.

Upon this universal, though indirect influence of divine power over the world at large, is grounded

Why did each conqueror rise up, precisely at the season before declared, and in the succession before fixed upon? Why did the heart of Cyrus so marvellously soften towards the despised and captive race of Israel, exactly at the time foretold for the conclusion of their captivity, and their return to the land of their fathers? Why, in short, did the complicated designs of men in various ages—designs which had in view worldly grandeur and power—why did they all tend to fulfil what the prophet of Jehovah had foretold, and bring about the designs of God?—One only answer can be given to these questions—the whole was predicted by Infinite Knowledge, and accomplished by the regulating hand of Infinite Power. God it was, who raised up these men to accomplish his will; softened the heart of Cyrus to “do *his* pleasure;” and guided all by his power, as he had contrived all by his wisdom.

By these considerations we first confirm our belief in the revealed oracles of God—for as the working of miracles were the appropriate and satisfactory evidence to the truth of Christianity at its foundation, so the fulfilment of prophecy is a fit and ample evidence of its truth in this our age, and shall so continue throughout future ages, even till all prophecy shall cease with its completion, and time itself shall be no longer. We also strengthen and animate our faith in the good providence of God—the same Omnipotent Being who in his majesty controlleth the counsels of empires, in his mercy watcheth over the poorest and lowest of us. Such a God is our God; and not a hair of our head perisheth but he knoweth it altogether\*.

\* \* This note was scarcely sent to the printer, (April 1826, 2d edition) when I met with “DAVISON’S discourses on Prophecy.” The whole subject of prophecy is there treated in so masterly a manner, that I cannot forbear referring my reader to the discourses themselves; particularly to the second part of the second discourse; and to the observations in the last discourse, upon the four great empires. The book is one of great erudition and sincere piety; the work of a scholar, devoting highly-gifted talent, and rich acquirement to the noblest aim which man or angel can pursue—the honour of God.

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\* Matth. x. 30, and Luke xii. 7.

our petition for the exercise of it in favour of ourselves. And there is good reason why we should offer this prayer: for at the very time we are called the people of God, we yet daily feel our proneness to break from the unseen hand, which would restrain and guide us <sup>1</sup>. We therefore pray him, to curb our wills, and regulate our affections; so subduing and directing them, that we may at last be trained to perfect obedience. The misery experienced by those who reject this guiding hand, is the most convincing proof of its necessity. How shall we, without that guidance, “love the thing which God commandeth, “or desire that which he doth promise?” He imperatively requires of us that we deny ourselves: our *unruly wills* instantly struggle against a *command*, obedience to which must be their subjection. So, when he would encourage us by the expectation of good, we too often fly back from his guidance; for our *unruly affections* are all set upon earthly objects, whereas his *promises* are spiritual and heavenly. Hence these our wills and affections can be brought under due subjection, only by the co-operating influence of his grace. From the Almighty, therefore, let us seek the aid so necessary for us; and let us seek it in an honest heart, with sincerity and truth.

The Collect states, that the object of this spiritual submission is the attainment of a settled peace of mind “among the sundry and manifold changes of “the world,” by fixing our hearts “where true joys “are to be found;” even upon the heavenly promises

<sup>1</sup> Isaiah lxiii. 13. Which “led them through the deep, as an “horse in the wilderness, that they should not stumb



through Jesus Christ our Lord. Every Christian must expect his share of those changes. Launched, at his baptism, upon "the waves of this troublesome "world<sup>1</sup>," on his course towards the land of everlasting life, he would be unreasonable not to expect that in such a course he must sometimes meet an adverse wind; sometimes be thrown back by an adverse tide; sometimes be tossed and driven by those storms and tempests with which this ocean of life abounds. And surely the changes of the world are but too truly signified by the changes of the ever restless ocean. As the ship, amid the perils of the sea—so is the Christian amid the dangers of life. In youth he enters upon his course in all the buoyancy of inexperience. Like a vessel newly trimmed, he sails for a time in safety, and in joyousness—gradually and imperceptibly the scene is changed—clouds arise,—he wonders whence! The wind rages—the sky lowers—the ocean foams in its might—one deep calleth unto another, and their waters rise with accumulated horrors, till "the mountains shake at the "tempest of the same;" and he turns to the Ruler of the storm with the mournful complaint of the fainting Psalmist, "all thy waves have gone over "me," "thou hast vexed me with all thy storms." *Then* had his fortitude failed—*then* had his soul been overwhelmed in despair, had not faith directed his view beyond the horrors of the deep, and fixed it, where no change can reach, where only true joys are to be found, even upon the land whither his Saviour and guide, the great Captain of his salvation,

<sup>1</sup> See the opening prayer in the Baptismal Service.

hath gone before: One, who as of old, so now, and for ever, is able to rule the waves, and bid the waters and the winds be still<sup>1</sup>.

Is not this a faithful picture of the true Christian, struggling against those unexpected trials of his faith and hope, to which the sundry and manifold changes of the world render him liable? When the waves of trouble compass him, and all escape seems cut off—when enemies persecute, and friends forsake, or betray—when the world deserts him—*then* he feels the full value of having *One* Being to flee to, who never slumbereth, never faileth, never forsaketh—One who can point out a way of escape, which the eagle's eye could never see; nor the wisdom of the wise descry.

Whoso, therefore, trusteth in the Lord—he is blessed. The pestilence may walk in darkness; the arrow may fly by noon-day; but neither shall the one reach him, nor the other harm him. *His* helper and defender is *God*. Such help is sure. God ruleth all things by the same Will which created them, and ordereth not only the changes of the natural world, but those still more fearful changes of the moral world, which spring from the unruly wills and affections of sinful men. These He bends to his unchanging purpose of mercy, making them and all things to work together for good to those who love and trust in Him. *He changeth not*. Hence we see, that those, who truly “love the thing which “he commandeth,” and sincerely desire that which

<sup>1</sup> “He arose and rebuked the wind and the sea; and there was “a great calm.” Matt. viii. 26.

“ he doth promise,” enjoy a peace, which as the deceitful calm of the world cannot give, so neither its storms take away nor its changes disturb ; for *He* is the author and giver of it. It is therefore like himself—the same, yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

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### 38. FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER<sup>1</sup>.

*O LORD, from whom all good things do come ; grant to us, thy humble servants, that by thy holy inspiration we may think those things that be good, and by thy merciful guiding may perform the same, through our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.*

IN the Mosaic account of the fall of man—as simple in its narrative as instructive in its application—we cannot but see, in strong contrast, the love of the Creator, and the ingratitude of the creature. We readily condemn “ man’s first disobedience ;” and perhaps even wonder at the infatuation, which could have led our first parents from the path of holiness and happiness. Too apt to forget our

<sup>1</sup> This is also called *Rogation* Sunday, or the Sunday of more earnest prayer; from a Latin word, signifying to ask : because during the three days intervening between it and Ascension day, certain *Rogations*—or extraordinary prayers, with supplication and fasting—were observed at this season during the earlier ages of the Church ; not only to prepare the minds of her people to celebrate with lowliness, the coming ascension : but also to implore God’s favour upon the fruits of the earth now springing up.

failures in the duties now enjoined us, we fondly imagine, that we should not have failed as Adam did: that we should have been contented with the liberty permitted us; satisfied with knowing only good. This, however, is a vain imagination. The same want of faith which makes us sin in our renewed state, would have worked our ruin, had we been in Paradise. It were wiser to consider, that *now* as *then*, to “lean unto our own understanding,” is death, and that the only safety is, “in all our “ways to acknowledge God, that *he* may direct our “paths<sup>1</sup> :” for if when one only avenue of evil was open, into *that*, Adam entered; how shall we, the children of Adam, escape now, when evil approaches by ten thousand avenues? If *continuance* in good were above the power of mere man, even in the bright days of innocence—so much more *now*, in these days of evil, either to think what is good, or to perform the same, requires a power, for which in this Collect we pray under the term of God’s “Holy Inspiration.”

The expression—“Inspiration”—is not used from any feeling of presumption in the suppliant; either as to the nature of the assistance prayed for, or the measure of it expected. He does not suppose that such divine power will be given, as will *irresistibly* lead him to holy thoughts, and bear him onward, *without effort* on his own part, in a holy course of action. He would as soon expect the breath of life, which is inspired into him by the Almighty, to set his bodily powers in motion, without the exercise of that Will, to which these powers are subservient.

<sup>1</sup> Prov. iii. 5, 6.

To suppose or expect any such irresistible, arbitrary, aid, would be as foolish, as if a sailor were to launch a ship without sail, or mast, or rudder, and expect to reach the destined port, by the mere undirected power of the winds of heaven. The aspirant in this prayer is actuated by a far different feeling. He is hopeful, but not presumptuous. He earnestly seeks for heavenly aid, but he does not neglect human means. He is the *wise* navigator, who whilst he furnishes his ship with every thing likely to be useful in his voyage—mast and sail, rudder and compass—trusts to the wind of heaven to give effect to his preparations—to give energy, and life, as it were, to the vessel he navigates; because he knows, that as without the wind, his preparations are useless, so without due preparation, the most favourable gale would blow in vain for him. He regulates the sail as the wind requires, he holds to the rudder, never loses sight of the compass, and watchfully keeps the narrow way to which it confines him, by night and by day—in the fair or stormy hour, striving still to make for port. So the *wise* Christian regulates the affections of his heart, as anxiously as if the event entirely depended upon his own exertions—steers by the aid of reason as steadily and carefully, as if his own wisdom could secure success—and takes for his compass the gracious gift of the word of God in as entire a spirit of faith, as though his own use of that gift would guard him from shipwreck—at the same time he prays for, and *trusts to divine inspiration*, to sanctify the best regulated affections, to clear the powers of the most exalted reason, and to render the most diligent study of the sacred word powerful



to save him amid the storms and tempests of an evil world, and bear him at last in safety to the haven of his rest.

Strength and will, reason and grace, are alike gifts of God, "from whom *all good* things do come;"—good desires—good resolutions. That God *cannot* be either the author, or mover of *evil*, is plain from this—that He *over-ruleth* evil<sup>1</sup>. Even the fall of man did but call forth a more enlarged exercise of divine love—a more magnificent display of divine power. Good is from God; evil from ourselves. Let us only fairly trace the ills of our life to their source; and we shall find most of them have their origin in ourselves. Misconduct has brought disgrace; a wrong judgment has frustrated a prosperous plan; want of self-control has hurried us to turn friends into foes; and blindly driven us into any path but the path of peace. Or if *unavoidable* misfortunes harass us; it is still our own fault, if evil be the issue. The humble Christian ever delights to feel, to know, to own, that God, even in our afflictions, intends our good. God would, though by *tribulation*, bring us not only to his kingdom of

<sup>1</sup> Thus our blessed Lord reasoned with the Pharisees, when they blasphemously referred his power of casting out devils to the influence of "Beelzebub, the prince of the devils." He shewed them the *absurdity*, as well as wickedness of charging him with abetting the author of evil, when all his miracles tended, most evidently, to the utter over-throw of evil. "And Jesus knew their thoughts, and said unto them, every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand: and if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself: how shall then his kingdom stand?" Matt. xii. 25, 26.

grace, but to his kingdom of glory<sup>1</sup>: and he therefore “chasteneth whom he loveth”—and, like a loving, yet faithful Father, “scourgeth every son whom “he receiveth<sup>2</sup>.”

If we are in affliction, let us meditate upon the goodness of the Lord, in our creation, preservation, and redemption. Let us reflect, how all things, originally created for the service of man, do still minister to our necessities—are still adapted to our convenience and comfort; whilst even the primary curse—“In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat “bread<sup>3</sup>”—is turned into blessing: for it calls into honest activity, and makes a source of satisfaction, those powers both of mind and body, which would otherwise be active for evil, and prove the fruitful source of misery. Let us next consider, that our very liability to distress of mind, body, or estate, *compels* us to a stronger trust in the providence of God for deliverance. As by *Him*, the very hairs of our head are all numbered; so all trials are known to and permitted by him. *He* hath also promised a just, though future reward to his good and faithful servants<sup>4</sup>: therefore, if we be enabled by his grace to possess our souls in patience, we shall hereafter be amply recompensed by his mercy. And the fulfilment of his promise both of mercy here and reward hereafter, is secured by the last and awful proof of his love, given to man in the redemption of the world by the sacrifice of the Saviour. In the contempla-

<sup>1</sup> Acts xiv. 22.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. xii. 6.

<sup>3</sup> Gen. iii. 19.

<sup>4</sup> Matth. xxv. 21. “Well done, thou good and faithful servant, “enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.”

tion of that holy mystery, we see displayed the fullness both of the wisdom and mercy of the Almighty. We unreservedly confess him to be the God “from whom all good things do come;” and whilst we declare the necessity of “a godly, righteous, and sober life;” we acknowledge ourselves to be no otherwise capable of *thinking* what is good, than as his holy *inspiration* enables us; and no further equal to perform the same, than as he vouchsafes his merciful guiding thereto; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord.



### 39. ASCENSION DAY.

*GRANT, we beseech thee, Almighty God, that like as we do believe thy only-begotten Son our Lord Jesus Christ to have ascended into the heavens, so we may also in heart and mind thither ascend, and with him continually dwell, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Ghost, one God world without end. Amen.*

“WHO shall ascend up into heaven!” exclaims, in wonder, the unenlightened heathen. “He that came down from heaven”—replies the Christian—“even the Son of Man, which is in heaven.” Wonderful indeed, and mysterious is the event, which we this day commemorate. But the mystery was unfolded—the wonder explained—when Jesus Christ did bear up into heaven the form of man, united to the majesty of God. No delusion! No deception!

“ A spirit hath not flesh and blood, as ye see me have.” “ Handle me, and see,” was the convincing appeal of our Lord to his disciples. He who was thus received up into a cloud of glory, was the same corporeal being, who ate, and drank, and conversed with the witnesses of his ascension. View now the disciples, as they behold the exaltation of the conqueror of the grave ! view them, as they stand amazed and confounded—wrapt in holy wonder and overpowering transport, at so incontestible a proof, that their Redeemer was their God ! with this transport at the sight of his exaltation into heaven, was mingled probably a sinking of heart at the thought of his separation from them. But their courage soon revived. The attendant angels interrupted their stedfast ardent gaze, by a declaration of the conqueror’s return with the same marked circumstances of divine glory ; “ Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven ? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner, as ye have seen him go into heaven <sup>1</sup>.”

Hence our joy. Do circumstances occur, under which it were impossible to bear ourselves with resignation and patience, unless we strengthened our faith and confirmed our hope ?—turn we to this history ; it will give confidence to the one, and sincerity to the other : and the end will be, that we shall go on our way rejoicing. What can be difficult for *Him* to effect, who was able, not only to raise himself from the dead, but to exalt himself to glory !

<sup>1</sup> Acts i. 11.

and what good can we desire, which this fact of his ascension, effected by his own individual Will, does not permit us to expect; since the very object of his ascending, was “to receive gifts for men” during their earthly sojourn; and “to prepare a place” for his faithful people; that after this painful life ended, they may be admitted to the place, whither he has ascended, “to their Father and his Father—to their “God and his God<sup>1</sup>.”

But he, whose affections are high set, even on heaven—waiteth not for that *final* gathering of the faithful to their Redeemer. *His* prayer—offered with all the fervency of the disciples, who gazed on the ascending Saviour—is what their’s doubtless was—that even *now*, he “may also in *heart* and *mind* “thither ascend, and with him *continually* dwell”—dwell with him by faith, in *spirit*, here; dwell with him *hereafter* in glorious reality, in his very presence, face to face. How blessed this heavenly-mindedness! surely angel-guests were hardly welcome, who should come between us and the vision thus unveiled to us of an ascending Saviour; unless they announced, that one day he should come again in like manner, in the glory of his Father with his holy angels. *That* thought brings us back to a life of *faith*. But faith is the evidence of things not seen<sup>2</sup>. Our Saviour is now more especially an object of faith; since he is removed far above out of our sight, living and reigning with the Father and the Holy Ghost for ever in heaven. It was counted praise to Thomas, that he believed because he had

<sup>1</sup> John xx. 17. and John xvi. 5. 28.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. 1.



seen Christ—pointed blessing is to those who believe, though they see not; “*Blessed* are they that have “*not* seen and yet have believed<sup>1</sup>.”

And shall we in very deed dwell with God? Shall this mortal put on immortality—shall weakness become power—and dishonour, glory<sup>2</sup>?—The heart of man can conceive no such change. Yet so changed we shall be: the word of TRUTH hath spoken it. *This* body—now subject to a thousand ills, from accident and disease, and soon to be mingled with corruption—shall be, one day, like unto Christ’s glorious body; shall know neither decay nor sickness, nor pain, nor diminution of strength, nor fading of beauty, but shall live for ever, restored to its original excellence; acknowledged in its *new* creation—“very good.” Nor is this all. A brighter glory yet awaits us. The soul—no longer debased by its present infirmities; released from the entanglements of the world, and free to the exercise of its high powers; fearless of evil, because victorious over sin—shall be united with that glorified body, and so become meet for the society of angels and of just men made perfect; meet to live even with Christ, who went before to prepare a place for us; and gave his Spirit to renew us in his image; that, united to him here, we might hereafter dwell with Him, and the Father, and the Holy Ghost; might see God, as he is—face to face; and live for ever in the light of His countenance, who is the inexhaustible fountain of the light of joy, and the author and giver of life everlasting.

<sup>1</sup> John xx. 29.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 43.

#### 40. SUNDAY AFTER ASCENSION DAY.

*O GOD, the King of glory, who hast exalted thy only Son Jesus Christ with great triumph unto thy kingdom in heaven ; we beseech thee leave us not comfortless ; but send to us thine Holy Ghost to comfort us, and exalt us unto the same place whither our Saviour Christ is gone before ; who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Ghost, one God, world without end. Amen.*

BEAUTIFUL as the Collects are, when considered as single Prayers—each preserving its proper unity—their beauty is increased, when we consider them as in some measure dependent upon, and strengthening one another.

This observation applies particularly to the Collect before us. We are supposed, as disciples of Christ, to be now in the anxious interval of time between the departure of our divine Master, and the coming of the Holy Ghost, his successor. Our minds are therefore under the influence of contending feelings of gratitude for past, and expectation of future good—of praise for mercies received, and of prayer for a renewal of them. Praise bursts from our lips to “God, the King of glory,” at whose command the gates did lift up their heads, and “ye were lift up, ye everlasting doors”—that Jesus Christ might with great triumph be exalted unto his Father’s kingdom in heaven. But lo ! O God,—thy servants are left desolate ! He, whom thou hast

exalted, was our Master, our Friend, our Guide, our Comforter. We pray thee leave us not thus comfortless. Rather, shew forth thy exceeding power and glory, in sending to us thine Holy Ghost to comfort us; *Him*, whom our glorified Master did promise us<sup>1</sup>. So shall thy glory be perfected. So shall it shine with undiminished splendour. "Let not the  
 "heathen say, where is now their God?" "*We are*  
 "*thine*; thou never bearest rule over *them—they*  
 "were not called by thy name<sup>2</sup>." For thy name and honour's sake guard the Church which thou hast chosen; and in the exercise of thine infinite majesty and unwearied love, defend and comfort us.

The declaration of the Redeemer's power, with which the Collect closes, is the very appropriate plea, on which we ground our petition, and justify our importunity. We declare that he "liveth and  
 "reigneth with the Father and the Holy Ghost, one  
 "God, world without end." Of *itself*, this is only a confession to the honour of an exalted Saviour; but in reference to the *object* he had in view in his exaltation, it is an indication of our hopes: because in our Intercessor we thus acknowledge our God.

Our daily confession is, that in the sight of the Omnipotent, no man living can be justified; because sin, in a greater or less degree—if only the sin of

<sup>1</sup> John xvi. 7. "Nevertheless I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you."

<sup>2</sup> Isaiah lxiii. 19. See also verse 16 of the same Chapter, "Thou O Lord, art our Father, our Redeemer; thy name is from everlasting."

imperfection—attaches to all our services, whether of penitence, or prayer, or obedience. “If we say “that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves.” God moreover requires that whoso approacheth *Him*, shall approach with spotless purity. Man therefore *seems* excluded; for what fellowship hath light with darkness? what communion can there be between sin and holiness—between man and God? Behold, in our Redeemer, our Intercessor also! If pardon for our offences, and reconciliation upon our repentance—if holy thoughts, and good desires—if a sanctified heart, and the blessing of heaven be granted to us at all,—the grant is made to us *solely* through the prevailing merits of Jesus Christ. But although no prayer is accepted by God—no petition answered, except through *him*<sup>1</sup>—*he* is *able* to render every humble petition acceptable, every fervent prayer available; for he is *omnipotent*<sup>2</sup>, “living and reigning with the Father and the Holy Ghost, one “God, world without end.” What therefore he undertakes, is already accomplished. And since he has undertaken to be our intercessor, let us not doubt. His intercession will avail. He is God. If “God justifieth, who is he that condemneth<sup>3</sup>?” Having moreover “by his one oblation of himself, “once offered, made a full, perfect, and sufficient “sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins

<sup>1</sup> John xiv. 6. “Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, and the “truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”

<sup>2</sup> Coloss. ii. 9. “For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the “Godhead bodily.”

<sup>3</sup> Rom. viii. 33, 34.

“ of the whole world <sup>1</sup> ;” shall not the intercessor be heard, in that he was obedient unto the whole law, and fulfilled *all* righteousness? Shall not the plea, which he will put in on our behalf, be received as sufficient to claim that, for which he intercedeth? He who came down from heaven to do his Father’s will; who by his death and resurrection finished the work appointed him; who has ascended up on high, leading captivity captive; who was received up into glory, and seated at the right hand of God, making intercession—He *cannot* intercede, and intercede *in vain* ! Where *then* would be the virtue of his sacrifice? where the reality of his power? where the perfection of his glory? But his *promise* dispels all doubt: “ *Whatsoever* ye shall ask the “ Father in *my* name, he will give it you<sup>2</sup>.” Herein let his faithful people rejoice—for “their Redeemer “ is strong: the Lord of hosts is his name: He shall “ thoroughly plead their cause<sup>3</sup>.”

Then let not our hearts be troubled. Let us take heed, that our confessions of penitence be sincere; our supplications for pardon heartfelt; our prayers for grace earnest; our desires spiritual; and our petitions for blessings submissive—*Then* we may trust that our gracious Redeemer will so *successfully* intercede, that the Father will hear and answer our supplications and prayers—that he will not leave us comfortless—that he will send his Holy Ghost to comfort us here, amid all our sorrows;

<sup>1</sup> See the prayer of consecration in the Communion Service.

<sup>2</sup> John xvi. 23. See the note upon this passage, page 53.

<sup>3</sup> Jer. l. 34.



whether spiritual or temporal—and that hereafter he will “exalt us unto the same place, whither our “Saviour Christ is gone before.” So, whether in life, or in death, we may still be with the Lord. Thus let us watch, and prepare us for that day, when “the Lord himself shall descend from heaven “with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and “with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ “shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in “the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so “shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words<sup>1</sup>.”



#### 41. WHITSUNDAY<sup>2</sup>.

*GOD, who as at this time, didst teach the hearts of thy faithful people, by the sending to them the light of thy Holy Spirit; Grant us by the same Spirit to have a right judgment in all things, and evermore to rejoice in his holy comfort, through the merits of Christ Jesus our Saviour; who liveth and reigneth with thee, in the unity of the same Spirit, one God, world without end. Amen.*

ON *this* day the scheme of *Redemption* was com-

<sup>1</sup> 1 Thess. iv. 16, 17, 18.

<sup>2</sup> Whitsunday,—or *White* Sunday. So called from the *white* garments, worn by the assembled multitude, who on this day, were accustomed to enter into the Church by baptism; and who adopted a white garment, as emblematical of that purity of heart, with which it behoves us all to approach the Lord God Omnipotent.

pleted. It is therefore a day blessed to the world for ever, and to be had in everlasting remembrance. Jesus Christ—whom the Almighty had foretold to Adam as the future Redeemer of mankind, and of whom all the Prophets had spoken—this day perfected the work appointed him. Having died for the sins of the whole world, and rose again for their justification, and ascended up into heaven as their intercessor, he sent down thence the Spirit of Sanctification, to *continue* his Church—what *he* had established it—the accepted family of God.

He well knew, that when his disciples were left alone, no longer either supported by his authority, directed by his wisdom, or comforted by his presence, they would be unable of themselves to carry on the great work he had begun. Dangers from *without*—poverty, contempt, and persecution—would soon overtake them. From *within* would arise feelings of fear, and desolateness, and hopelessness. The cause would be lost, from the weakness of its supporters. Jesus however, “having “loved his own, loved them unto the end,” and provided for all their exigencies by a bounty, commensurate with his love—even by the bountiful gift of the Holy Spirit. He was himself removed; but the Spirit was to abide for ever, and to remain to his Church, its guardian, even to the end. It was not however bestowed immediately—because in the short interval between the resurrection of our Saviour and his ascension, there was little fear of harm to the infant Church, either from the desertion of its friends, or the activity of its enemies. The latter were confounded at the splendid and awful

proofs given by Jesus in his life, death, and resurrection, that he was from God, and that God was with him. The minds of the former were still deeply impressed with the heavenly scene they had witnessed—a crucified Saviour restored to life, and received up into heaven; nor could the new and powerful impression be weakened by any circumstances of fear or hope, which the world might hold out to them.

It is equally instructive and interesting to view the disciples in these their early days of trial. We see them, few in number, and weak in power; yet faithful and zealous: conscious of their weakness, yet seeking strength, by continuing, with one accord, in supplication and prayer. Thus they wait, with a resolved patience, the advent of the Comforter. At length, on the day of Pentecost, when they were met together to keep the holy feast appointed them, the expected Comforter was sent from Heaven, with demonstration of power and great glory. “Suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues, like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.” The assembled disciples immediately affirmed this to be the fulfilment of their divine Master’s prophecy, and the completion of his promises. They acknowledged it to be the gift of God, through his son Jesus Christ, who “being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father

“ the promise of the Holy Ghost, hath shewn forth  
“ this, which ye do now see and hear.” What a  
reward to their patient faith! Since their Lord’s  
ascension, the *expectation* of this gift had kept alive  
their hope. Lo! now was it realized! every fear  
was dispelled, every doubt removed, every apprehension  
taken away. They were convinced, that  
Christ had not only ascended into heaven, but was  
gone to his Father; because they received a miraculous  
gift, which none but God could bestow, and  
which their Master had promised should be bestowed  
upon them, after his ascension. Supported by their  
conviction of this truth, they boldly declared the  
*divine* character of the Saviour, and have left to the  
Church, for ever this record of consolation—“ Let  
“ all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God  
“ had made this same Jesus, whom ye have cruci-  
“ fied, both Lord and Christ.”

The *circumstances* attending this miraculous  
pouring out of the Spirit<sup>1</sup>, had a remarkable affinity  
with those, which on the same day in former ages,  
accompanied the publication of the law on Mount  
Sinai<sup>2</sup>. They were however modified according to  
the different situations of those upon whom the  
gifts were severally bestowed. When the Law was  
given—the gift was accompanied with thunderings,  
and lightnings, and the noise of a trumpet. The

<sup>1</sup> Joel ii. 28. “And it shall come to pass afterwards, that I  
“ will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh.” Also Isaiah xlv. 3. and  
Acts ii. 17.

<sup>2</sup> Exod. xix. 18. The giving of the law upon Mount Sinai, in  
Arabia, took place about 1500 years before the miraculous gift of  
the Holy Ghost, which we this day commemorate.

gift of the Holy Ghost also, was accompanied with Light, and a rushing noise, and the utterance of every language under heaven. But the light was not a light of terror<sup>1</sup>: and the noise was neither the thunder, which spoke the terrors of the law; nor the trumpet-sound, which implied a partial call. The *light* was the light of comfort, which, like the Sun of righteousness, brought healing on its wings, shining alike for *all*. The *sound* was of “a rushing “mighty wind,” with power and majesty indeed, but implying that the operation of this gift was to be—like the air of heaven—unseen, except by its effects; undiscerned by the eye of sense, yet felt and recognized by the heart; bringing life, and health, and joy—a blessing free to all<sup>2</sup>.

But in vain is the offer of blessing universal, unless the desire to receive it, and the endeavour rightly to apply it, be universal also. The light of the Holy Spirit, whilst it is free to *all*, cannot be

<sup>1</sup> Exod. xx. 18, 19.

<sup>2</sup> Thus the mercy of God was enlarged with the enlarged field of action in which it was to be displayed. The various modes by which, in former ages, and under the varied condition of his Church, he had been pleased to convey to it the knowledge of his will, and the sanction of his authority, were all now to cease. His family—the Church—were no longer to expect either that immediate converse with the Deity, which was granted to the favoured of the Patriarchs: or the visible declaration of his Will, as wont of old to be read on the breastplate of the High Priest; or the dreams and visions vouchsafed to the holy Prophets. One channel of Revelation alone was to remain; and *that*, free to all; even the *Gospel* of Jesus Christ—by the guidance of whose Word and Spirit, the kingdom of heaven was henceforth to be opened to *all believers*—“to them that fear his name “small and great;” “of *every* nation, and kingdom, and language, “and people.” Rev. xi. 18. and xiv. 6.



an *effective* teacher, except to the *faithful*. Christ made the promise to those, who had continued his *faithful* servants. When he gave the blessed assurance, that “the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you” — the words were directed to his apostles, as to those who were not ashamed of him or his doctrines; but were rather willing to endure all things for his sake, and the Gospel’s.

Are we then anxious to avail ourselves of the same great blessing? do we in sincerity wish to be taught by the light of the Holy Spirit? let us be *true* and worthy members of that pure and holy Church, to which the promise was made; faithful in receiving, as He, who promised, hath been faithful in bestowing the gift. We shall *then* find that this Spirit will teach *us* likewise, all things necessary to our everlasting salvation. To us also, if faithful to our high calling as the chosen of God, it will be for ever, the pillar of a cloud; both for shadow and light, for defence and guidance<sup>2</sup>. No enemy shall subdue, no night overtake us. We may be “troubled on every side, yet shall not be distressed; perplexed but not in despair; persecuted but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed<sup>3</sup> :” for “the excellency of the power will be of God, and not of ourselves<sup>4</sup>.” Thus unweariedly labouring to lead a good life, and trusting for success only to

<sup>1</sup> John xiv. 26.

<sup>3</sup> 2 Cor. iv. 8, 9.

<sup>2</sup> Exod. xiv. 20.

<sup>4</sup> 2 Cor. iv. 7.

the power of the Spirit, which helpeth our infirmities ; we shall be in the world, yet preserved from the evil of it<sup>1</sup>, shall be afflicted with temptation, yet enabled to overcome it. Our course will be difficult ; yet shall we find support proportionate thereto ; till all our wanderings in this wilderness of life being ended—all our trials closed—God will guide us, if we be obedient to his guidance, in safety and honour to our promised land of rest.

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## MONDAY IN WHITSUN WEEK.

OUR attention having been called to the miraculous gift of the Holy Spirit, we are directed to pray, that God would “ grant us, by the same Spirit to “ have a right judgment in all things, and evermore “ to rejoice in his holy comfort ; through the merits “ of Jesus Christ our Saviour.”

To “ have a right judgment in all things,” has ever been the aim of wise and good men ; and was the express blessing chosen by Solomon. “ Give “ thy servant an understanding heart, to judge thy “ people, that I may discern between good and “ bad<sup>2</sup>.” And every man, who wishes to do his duty in that state of life to which it may have pleased God to call him, adopts the spirit of this prayer ; whether he be called to rule, or to obey.

<sup>1</sup> John xvii. 15. “ I pray *not* that thou shouldest take them out “ of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.”

<sup>2</sup> 1 Kings iii. 9.

If even in the common affairs of life, we could always discern between good and evil, how many perplexities and vexations should we avoid! the Apostolic rule would be no longer difficult of observance: "giving no offence in any thing," we should "have a good conscience before all men." Occasions however will sometimes occur, when our decisions must prove unsatisfactory; and when the highest human wisdom can only choose the lesser evil. In such cases we are not to be discouraged from a watchful *endeavour* to judge rightly; but rather persevere in well-doing; knowing that "the integrity of the upright shall guide them<sup>1</sup>." We are to stand fast in our integrity, unshaken; and illustrate, by our conduct, that high principle of our Christian profession—to act uprightly, and leave the event to God<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Prov. xi. 3.

<sup>2</sup> It has possibly happened to you, to have your mind so suspended between the desire of acting right, and the fear of acting wrong, that a wish has escaped you—"Oh! that I could know the event!" This very uncertainty is only one amongst other calls upon that faith, which is the proper and peculiar principle of your life, as a Christian. Your God judgeth every action *not* by the *event*, but by the *motive*. Be sure then, take but heed that your motive be right, and the event you may safely leave to him. It is the hand of mercy which throws over the future the veil of obscurity. And, if you duly weigh the result of your own experience, I am sure you would not willingly accept a full knowledge of *future* cares, and sorrows, and trials—of honest actions maligned, and upright motives misrepresented—even upon the condition of foreseeing their opposite joys and consolations in the occasional success of benevolence, and the occasional triumph of sincerity. This one thing—most needful to be known—*This* you do know, that where faith has been the spring of motive, and the principle of action—they who have done good shall go into life eternal. Possess then thy soul in patience!

In reference, however, to the duty we owe to God, is a right judgment more especially to be desired. Hence David, anxious to avoid the extremes of vain trust in himself, and presumptuous confidence in God, exclaims in the fulness of his heart, “O let me “have *understanding* in the way of *godliness*”<sup>1</sup> The Collect therefore most seasonably instructs us, that such should *now* be *our* supplication; lest in the fulness of grateful joy for the gift of the holy Spirit, who is “to teach us *all* things,” we relax our exertions, and forget, that though the Spirit alone can teach, yet he will teach in vain, unless we are disposed to learn; are really desirous of his wisdom; and heartily inclined to his guidance. The Apostle, impressed with a deep feeling of this truth, exhorts us, to “grieve not the Holy Spirit of God,” that is—resist not his influence, but yield to his good suggestions; whether they be conveyed by your conscience, or by the word and ministry of the Gospel; or by the correcting and monitory providences of your heavenly Father. And whoever is really under the guidance of the Spirit of God, in thought, word, and deed, may look to have a right judgment in all things; and enabled to refuse the evil, and choose the good, and walk in a perfect way.

Our Collect further attributes this “right judgment” to “the same Spirit,” which enlightened the minds of the disciples on the day of Pentecost. As this Spirit “moving upon the face of the waters” shared in the glories of the first creation, when man became a living soul<sup>2</sup>; as by its miraculous power

<sup>1</sup> Psalm ci. 2. Prayer Book version.

<sup>2</sup> Gen. i. 2.

it declared itself a sharer also in the new creation, when man was created anew by the grace of God through Jesus Christ; so is it now the living spring of spiritual power: not only in those high and awful duties which lie more immediately between God and our souls, but in the daily duties we owe to our neighbour—duties, the performance of which, upon the express declaration of Christ himself, we believe to be of vital importance to our salvation<sup>1</sup>. And as occasions continually occur in life, wherein difficulties arise, and obstacles present themselves in our course of action, which perplex us in our decision; it is not merely *not presumption*—it is manifestly *Christian wisdom*, to seek for “right judgment” from *that* Being, who not only formed our minds, and furnished them with reason, by the co-operation of the divine Spirit; but is pleased also to preserve, strengthen, and guide them by the intervention of the same.

Wherefore, if any man think that he can rightly exercise the powers of his mind without the blessing of God, in answer to his prayers for the same, he proves himself less well-informed, than even the heathens of old; who, in all the pride of their philosophy, still supposed a Deity to preside over wisdom; and had recourse, even in the wildest flights of their poetry, to invocation for a spirit to inspire and prosper them. But we need only look to our Bible, and there we shall see fully exemplified the doctrine of this Collect. Solomon, on the throne of Israel, exercised “right judgment,” be-

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xxii. 39, 40. “And *the second is like unto it*, thou shalt “love thy neighbour as thyself. On these *two* commandments hang “all the law and the prophets.”



cause the Lord of light had enlightened his mind with wisdom. Nebuchadnezzar, in his degradation, was like a brute beast, no longer capable of discerning between right and wrong, because he had so leaned upon his own understanding, and so followed the suggestions of his own proud Will, that he sought not the Spirit of God, either for wisdom or guidance<sup>1</sup>. Nay, Cyrus himself—in the moment of conquest—the guide of the captive-chosen to their land again—the restorer of the Temple to its worship—wise in counsel—powerful in war<sup>2</sup>—even *he* stood on his high eminence, but a monument of delegated wisdom. He was “the anointed of the Lord<sup>3</sup>.” Let us then pray to the same Spirit, for assistance to discern

<sup>1</sup> Daniel iv. 25. “They shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, and they shall make thee eat grass as oxen, and they shall wet thee with the dew of heaven, and seven times shall pass over thee, till thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will.”

<sup>2</sup> Such is the character of Cyrus as recorded by Plato. Indeed it may be useful to remark that his character is represented by various Heathen writers as one of more than common interest. Even his name, signifying the Sun, was adopted as designating a character of no ordinary splendour. The father of history, Herodotus, with Xenophon and others, enter much into detail, in representing to us the benevolent patriot, the discreet counsellor, the brave warrior; as exemplified in the victorious Cyrus.

When the student thus finds the record of sacred history confirmed by the writings of Heathen philosophers and historians, he should gratefully acknowledge the good providence of God, who permits even those who knew him not, to become witnesses of his Word, and to bear so strong, though indirect evidence to the truth of his religion.

<sup>3</sup> Isaiah xlv. 1, 4, 5. “*I girded thee, though thou hast not known me.*”

what is our line of duty even in the daily business of life : that if we read, our studies may be blessed, and turned, directly or indirectly, to the honour of God : that if we speak, a guard may be set upon the door of our lips, lest we speak guile : that our thoughts may be in all things pure, and our meditations acceptable in the sight of God : that in our conduct towards men we give no offence, but rather deny ourselves ; if so we may cut off occasion from them that seek occasion. Thus may we hope to live in the fear of God—at peace before men—and with “ a right judgment in all ” those “ things,” which constitute our duty here ; and for the good or ill exercise of which, we must be judged hereafter <sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xii. 36. “ But I say unto you, that every idle word that men “ shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.” “ Every *idle* word”—that is—every careless word of contempt towards God and his religion ; and every causeless word of injury, every breath of uncharitableness towards your neighbour—must be accounted for. Nor is any sin so trivial, but that men must give account thereof, at *that* judgment-bar, where it will either be punished to the impenitent ; or pardoned to the penitent, through the great and *only* sacrifice.

The original Greek word points out the danger of speaking *inconsiderately*—of saying *that*, which by injuring the fame, or fortune, or feelings of others renders ourselves accountable ; and takes from recklessness its excuse for evil. “ Am I not in sport ?”—is henceforth no palliative to the evil of a bitter taunt ; a rash surmise ; or an implied impeachment of our neighbour’s conduct. For all these things, God will bring thee into judgment. Thus awfully does our blessed Lord teach us, that we are *not* to be disregardful of the consequences towards others of what we do ; or what we *say* !

## TUESDAY IN WHITSUN WEEK.

RELIGION—with all the watchfulness which it enjoins; with all the strictness which it enforces; with all the trials to which its followers are subject,—is *intended* to be, and *is*, the *comfort* of mankind. Hence, when the Son of God promised to give to his people the Holy Ghost, as the spring of religion in their souls, he characterized his gift as “the *Comforter*.”

Our Collect therefore, in reference to this characteristic of the Spirit, directs us to pray, that we may “evermore rejoice in his holy *comfort*.”

Is it asked why *all* men do not find this holy comfort, which is *free* to *all*?—They do *not seek* it—and they do not seek it, because they do not feel the sorrow, for which it is the remedy. As health however is more highly prized after sickness has wasted the frame, and exhausted the spirits,—as riches are most valued by those who have suffered the misery of indigence—as he who has known and escaped from danger, most truly rejoices in safety—and as one snatched from the gate of death might best declare the value of life,—so the penitent can best prize “the comfort of the Spirit.” He was once sick; there was no health in him. He was poor, and his soul destitute. His spiritual enemies compassed him on every side, but were unheeded. Dangers surrounded him, but he blindly regarded not. Living in sin, he once stood on the very verge of death eternal—only the narrow span of life in-

tervening between him and destruction. Mark him *now* ! He has found a healer<sup>1</sup>, “who covereth all his sins, and healeth all his infirmities<sup>2</sup>.” His soul hath found abundance; even the inexhaustible riches of the grace of God. His enemies still surround, and continually war against him; but he watchfully keeps them in check, being clothed with the whole armour of God. Dangers still threaten; but he is aware of their consequences, and takes measures to escape them. His mind is enlightened; and he looks back with mingled horror and wonder at the awful path from which he now stands rescued, and he henceforth lives, “rejoicing in the holy comfort” of the Spirit of God.

Under these circumstances, many troubles may compass him; many afflictions overtake him; but he has support within, which the world is as powerless to take away, as it is unable to give: many waters cannot quench it, neither can the floods drown it. The Spirit, that appointed teacher of the faithful, leads him to the divine promise; “all things shall work together for good to those who love and fear God.” And his own experience bears ready testimony to the truth of David’s assertion, that “the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him;” a secret joy, with which the stranger—the stranger to religion—intermeddleth not.

The Christian is thus built up a holy temple to the Lord; sanctified by his presence, and consecrated to his service. All within is peace. *No*

<sup>1</sup> Exod. xv. 26.

<sup>2</sup> Psalm ciii. 3. The word “*Jesus*” means *Healer*.

noise of the *world* is permitted there to enter<sup>1</sup>. *There dwelleth One*, who is a covert from every storm, and a refuge from every tempest; who “covereth the faithful with the shadow of his hand, “that he may say unto Zion, thou art my people<sup>2</sup>.” And all men *may* be his people. The coming of the Holy Ghost, whereby we are made the people of God, and which we at this time commemorate, was a proof, even in the *manner* of its bestowal, not less of infinite wisdom, as conveying instruction; than of unbounded power, evidenced by the miracle itself. The gift of tongues, by which it was accompanied, signified most plainly, that people of *all* languages were henceforth to be gathered to the Lord—that the Gospel sound should go out into *all* lands, and her words unto the ends of the world—that from the rising to the setting sun, *all* nations should bow before the declaration of Jehovah, “I am “the Lord; there is none else beside me<sup>3</sup>,” and should worship his holy name, till time shall be no longer. Eternity shall then gather into one, people of all nations, re-uniting them under one language—the language of holy thanksgiving for ever, to Him who sitteth upon the throne, that King, eternal, immortal, invisible—that only wise and good, God Almighty;

<sup>1</sup> In 1 Kings vi. 7. we read that in the building of Solomon's temple, “there was neither hammer, nor axe, nor any tool of iron, “heard in the house while it was building:” and it is part of David's advice, when he would teach us to preserve holy converse with God, that we “commune with our hearts, in our chamber, and *be still*”—laying aside for a season those busy, and disturbing thoughts with which the world, if allowed to intrude upon our meditations, will perplex and harass us.

<sup>2</sup> Isaiah li. 16.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. xlv. 5.



who, as in his wrath he divided the nations and their languages, so in his mercy will re-unite them into one language and one spirit—even the language of everlasting praise, and the spirit of universal love—through the merits of Jesus Christ our Saviour: who liveth and reigneth with him, in the unity of the same Spirit, one God, world without end. Amen.



#### 42. TRINITY SUNDAY.

*ALMIGHTY and everlasting God, who hast given unto us thy servants grace by the confession of a true faith, to acknowledge the glory of the eternal Trinity, and in the power of the Divine Majesty to worship the Unity; we beseech thee, that thou wouldest keep us stedfast in this faith, and evermore defend us from all adversities; who livest and reignest one God, world without end. Amen.*

WITH the services of Whitsunday, we close our commemoration of the several circumstances, which marked the coming of God in the flesh, and have a more immediate connexion with the redemption of mankind.

We have seen the star of Jacob dawn over the hills of Judah, and illumine the land of the chosen. We have seen the light increase in brightness and power, till its shining came down from heaven to earth, and fell upon the Church of Christ, of whom the whole family is named in heaven and earth.

Once only did we for a short moment lose sight of it; when its splendour sunk in the grave, and buried with it our hope, “that it had been *he*, which “should have redeemed Israel.” We soon however hailed with joy its re-appearance, when “the Light of “the world” rose again with renewed glory—passed a short period on earth, to instruct and cheer, by his light, the Church which had mourned his removal—and then, with awful majesty, ascended into his own heaven; that he might thence, by his Spirit, enlighten *all* men: giving light, and life, and joy, so long as there should be worlds to be inhabited, or inhabitants to be enlightened<sup>1</sup>.

The result of our meditations upon the whole system of redemption is, that to effect so great salvation for the fallen sons of Adam, we believe God was pleased to reveal himself—not only as the Father of all his creatures, but as their Saviour also, and their Sanctifier: that, as God the Father, his tender mercy is over all his works; as God the Son, he even came down from heaven, and gave his life a ransom for many, that all who believe in him should not perish, but have everlasting life; as God the Holy Ghost, he abideth ever, a Guardian, Guide, and Comforter, sanctifying all the elect people of God. We believe further, that in *each* of these characters, he convincingly proved himself, by the divine power which his works evinced, to be *God*. Our faith moreover is, that of these, none is afore or

<sup>1</sup> For an explanation of this comparison of religion to light, refer to the Comment upon the Collects for the first Sunday in Advent,—St. John the Evangelist—and the third Sunday after Easter.

after other, none is greater or less than another ; they are co-eternal, co-equal ; three persons but one God. “ Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord <sup>1</sup>.”

Throughout the Collects, such has been the uniform tenor of our faith ; either expressed, or implied. Our Church, however, very properly directs us to make more *particular* confession of it *now* ; for since the Holy Ghost hath been sent to perfect the system of redemption through Jesus Christ, it is necessary that we rightly confess his character, and office—that his office is, to sanctify all the elect people of God <sup>2</sup> ; and that in his work of sanctification, *he* stands, equal with the Saviour, in the character of *God*.

The present Collect declares that the confession of a true faith is *this*—“ to acknowledge the glory “ of the eternal Trinity <sup>3</sup> ; and in the power of the “ divine majesty to worship the Unity.” And faith in this doctrine is not only *reasonable*, but is very properly declared by our Church to be *necessary*—*not* because it is the faith of her followers ; or a faith resting upon human authority—but because the doctrine is of God, and faith in it is taught and insisted upon by the word of God—by that very Gospel, in which every Christian *professes* himself a *believer* <sup>4</sup>.

Faith in the doctrine of a Trinity in Unity is

<sup>1</sup> Mark xii. 29. “ And Jesus answered him, the first of all the “ commandments is, hear, O Israel ; the Lord our God is one Lord.”

<sup>2</sup> See the questions and answers which follow the Belief in our Church Catechism.

<sup>3</sup> *Trinity*—the strict meaning of the word is *Three in One*. Its meaning *here* is—*Three Persons and One God*.

<sup>4</sup> The reader is referred to the note upon this subject, page 152.

*reasonable.* We believe many things which we neither understand, nor comprehend: our care is, that those who inform us, are worthy of belief. We ground the reasonableness of faith, on the credibility of testimony. If we believe the witnesses, we believe the fact. This happens to us every day, in our transactions with each other. In matters in which we are ourselves ignorant, we believe the philosopher, the traveller, the physician, and others who may have either the skill, or the knowledge, or the experience we need; provided only, that they be morally worthy of credit. Nay, it is thus that we believe even in our own existence. Our soul, and body, and life are in *one* frame: and we have no hesitation in receiving this mystery, because we have the credible testimony of our reason and our senses, that we do so exist. As we stand over a sleeping fellow-creature, and behold him breathing, we are convinced that there is a body, and life; but by the unconsciousness of the person to our presence, we are also convinced, that the soul—that spring of action, speech, and thought—is distinct from body, and from life. When to sleep succeeds death, and we contemplate the dead, we perceive that not only the light of the *mind*, is removed, but the light of the *body* also, and nothing remains but the frame; equally unconscious and inanimate. Yet in a living, rational man, we see the three united; body, life, and soul; and we believe in the union, because we believe the testimony of our reason, and our senses, which are witnesses to the fact<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> This mode of reasoning is adopted *not* in *proof*, but in *illustration*. Even St. Paul, in his matchless and memorable discourse upon the

But if faith in any thing incomprehensible be reasonable, when supported by the testimony of men; faith in the Trinity must be not only reasonable, but *necessary*, when supported by the greater testimony of the word of God <sup>1</sup>.

At the baptism of our blessed Saviour, we have the *three Persons* distinctly marked out, and engaged at the same time; each in his peculiar office <sup>2</sup>. *Jesus* is baptized, the *Spirit* descends visibly upon him, and the *Father*, by an approving voice from heaven, declares his gracious presence. It is impossible for a distinction of persons to be more plainly set forth.

These three persons are each *God*. That the *Father* is *God*, we have only to consider him as the Creator and Preserver of this earth, and the worlds around it. *He* must be Head over all from the beginning. “Ye are my witnesses,” saith the Lord to Jacob and Israel, “that *I* am *God* <sup>3</sup>.” The *Son* is also *God*. St. John, speaking of him as “the Word,” affirms expressly, “the Word was *God*.” And his miracles which he did, from the day when he turned water into wine, to the hour when, after raising himself from the dead, He ascended into heaven by the

resurrection, makes use of a comparison, which beautiful and convincing as it is to a humble mind, is not intended to meet all the objections which a caviller might bring forward. Its object is, to illustrate, not to prove the fact: the fact had been *proved* before, and it pretends to nothing more than illustration. The passage alluded to is explained in the note to the Comment upon the Seventh Sunday after Trinity.

<sup>1</sup> “If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater.”  
1 John v. 9.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. iii. 16, 17.

<sup>3</sup> Isaiah xliii. 12.



exercise of his own Will, all *prove* him to have been, “very God”—*prove*, that his own assertion was founded upon eternal truth—“I and my Father are *One*.” So likewise the *Holy Ghost* is *God*. When Peter charged Ananias and Sapphira with the guilt of falsehood, he at once reminded them that, as they had lied to the Holy Ghost, they had lied *not* unto man, but unto God.

Yet, *God* is *One*. “Before me,” saith Jehovah, “there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me. I, even I, am the Lord; and beside me there is no Saviour<sup>1</sup>.” “Thou shalt have none other gods before me<sup>2</sup>.”

Thus, great is the *mystery* of Godliness. As a *mystery*, it were vain in man to pretend an explanation of it. But since we reasonably believe many things which are beyond our comprehension, when we have *credible testimony* to their truth, it is but reasonable to believe what the Holy Scriptures testify. We believe upon the testimony of our reason and senses, both our own existence, and the existence of the natural world around us—though we are *unable* to *comprehend* even the earing of the corn for our food, or the budding of a flower, or the opening of a leaf, or the springing up of the blade of grass we tread upon. The glorious sun in the firmament is to us a mystery. But where is the man who will refuse to warm himself by its rays or guide himself by its light, because his reason is not able to *comprehend* how that light and warmth lighten his path, or gladden him. We therefore reasonably believe,

<sup>1</sup> Isaiah xliii. 10, 11.

<sup>2</sup> Deut. v. 7.

though we cannot comprehend, the doctrine of our Collect. The Almighty is past finding out in his works of nature, and providence; who shall expect to search him out in his works of grace? *Earthly* things baffle and confound our reason; who, then, shall wonder if we grasp in vain at the knowledge of *heavenly* things? Yet is our faith perfectly consistent with the free exercise of our reason. Nay, what were more unreasonable, than *not* to have faith in a doctrine, to the truth of which the Almighty hath, by his word, been pleased to bear testimony.

Our faith in the doctrine of Trinity in Unity, thus established, is not a barren but a lively faith; productive of peace and joy. In peace we trust the welfare of our souls to this our God; and rejoice in the *strength* of our salvation. The Father, who wills our salvation, is *God, Almighty*.—The Son, who died to do his Father's will, is *able* to do it, because *He* also is *God, Almighty*.—The Holy Ghost, who was sent from heaven to *complete* our salvation, is equal to the work, for *He* likewise is *God, Almighty*.—Yet not three Gods, but *one* God; and having *one* object, even the recovery of fallen man to his inheritance in heaven.

Such being the Christian's faith, such its blessings—"we beseech thee," O Father, "that thou "wouldest keep us *steadfast* in this faith, and ever-  
"more defend us from all adversities; who livest  
"and reignest, one God, world without end.  
"Amen."

### 43. FIRST SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

*O GOD, the strength of all them that put their trust in thee, mercifully accept our prayers ; and because through the weakness of our mortal nature we can do no good thing without thee, grant us the help of thy grace, that in keeping thy commandments we may please thee both in will and deed, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

AFTER contemplating God in his several characters, as Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,—Almighty to preserve, Almighty to redeem, Almighty to sanctify—weak must be the faith, which does not unreservedly *trust* in him ; cold the heart, which does not repose in peace upon his everlasting strength.

In this Collect, therefore, we are very properly taught to address God, as “ the *strength* of all them “ that put their trust in him.” An address, to the perfect propriety and justice of which, the history of the people of God in former ages, and our own experience probably, alike bear ample testimony.

So long as Israel trusted in the Lord their God, was it not well with them ? The plagues of Egypt harmed them not—their enemies were overwhelmed, and sunk like lead in the mighty waters—the barren land gave food—from the stony rock the waters gushed out. Whereas, when doubts, and fears, and heaviness came upon them ; when their spirits fainted within them, and sorrows compassed them ; when

they complained that God had forsaken them—whence arose their complaint? And what did it prove? It proved them to have first forsaken God. They had rejected his authority, and would none of *his* counsels: *therefore* they were given up to *their own* counsels, and left to their own hearts' lusts, till destruction came upon them like an armed man, and their land was left unto them desolate. Thus is it with ourselves. Let us retrace even our own steps in life; and call to mind the days that are past, within our own experience. If in the dark hour of affliction—when sickness has suddenly unnerved our frame; or unexpected poverty has come upon us; or unmerited disgrace has threatened us; or any unlooked for calamity has overclouded us—if in such an hour we have sunk overwhelmed; let our own consciences honestly confess, that the *heaviest* part of the misery was caused by *ourselves*—that we had lived, trusting in our own resources—in our riches, if we possessed them, or in our wisdom, or our power, or our influence, or our good name: that we had forsaken the *Lord* our strength, and leaned upon the world; which, like a broken reed, piercing whom it fails, proved strong to wound; but impotent to save. Whereas, when stayed we ourselves upon God, and did not find him “a strong tower of defence against all our enemies?” Where is the man, who has sought help from the Lord in the hour of his distress; praying with all his heart, and with all his soul; and hath not found the practical truth of the well-tried David's confession, that “God is “our refuge, and strength, a very *present* help in “trouble.”

The express object however of this prayer for *divine* help, is *not* to exclude the necessity of endeavour on our own part, *but* to further and give effect to our exertions in active holiness, that we may add to our faith, virtue; and that “keeping *His* commandments, we may please him both in will and *deed*.”

How admirably does our Church, on this, as indeed on every occasion, preserve in her prayers the true spirit of the Gospel! She disclaims in her sons, self-power, self-righteousness; she totally disavows the possibility of any such goodness as can merit salvation—at the same time, she insists upon the most watchful and strenuous exertion; the most holy and upright conduct. The spirit of her doctrine is, that man might rather stop the earth in its course, dim the mid-day sun, or bring the stars from heaven, than gain salvation by his own righteousness alone: but she strenuously opposes the notion—equally absurd and unscriptural—that grace will effect salvation, without the co-operation of a renewed heart and a holy life. And thus her doctrine is not less plain to our reason, than it is in strict accordance with the most spiritual view of “our profession; which is to follow the example of our Saviour Christ, and be made *like unto him*; that as he died and rose again for us, so should we, who are baptized, die from sin and rise again unto righteousness; continually mortifying all our evil and corrupt affections, and daily proceeding in all *virtue and godliness of living* <sup>1</sup>.”

<sup>1</sup> See the exhortation at the close of the Baptismal Service.



Nor is it presumptuous to hope, that in keeping the commandments of God, “we may please him both in will and deed.” For though “we be unworthy to offer unto him any sacrifice,” yet such is the prevailing influence of our Intercessor, that if there be no guile on our lips, no wilful evil in our actions, no allowed<sup>1</sup> impurity in our thoughts, no cherished leaning to the world in our affections, we may trust that God will please to “accept our duty and service”—for Christ’s sake, accept our actions if they be good; our words if they be sincere; our affections if they be well directed; “not weighing our merits, but pardoning our offences, through the same Jesus Christ our Lord<sup>2</sup>.” Let these considerations lead us earnestly to pray our heavenly Father to work in us *that* which is *well-pleasing* in his sight<sup>3</sup>, and so approve our humble services, that we may at last receive the welcome salutation; “well done, good and faithful servant,—enter thou into the joy of thy Lord<sup>4</sup>.”

<sup>1</sup> See that part of the comment upon the Collect for the ninth Sunday after Trinity, in which is shewn the necessity and advantage of not allowing the first suggestions of evil to gain any hold upon our minds.

<sup>2</sup> See the prayer which follows the Lord’s prayer in the Communion Service.

<sup>3</sup> Heb. xiii. 21.

<sup>4</sup> Matt. xxv. 21.

#### 44. SECOND SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

*O LORD, who never failest to help and govern them whom thou dost bring up in thy steadfast fear and love ; keep us, we beseech thee, under the protection of thy good providence, and make us to have a perpetual fear and love of thy holy name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

MANY, who readily acknowledge themselves children of God, with a view to gain their inheritance in the kingdom of heaven, omit to bear in mind the obligations of duty, which rest upon them in that character. *Religion* is but another name for the perfection of *filial duty* towards God. It consists, in believing all which He is pleased to reveal, and in doing all things which He is pleased to command. It is, therefore, *not* a mere *occasional* display of devotion, but an *enduring* feeling of reverential love, and glad obedience—*not* an *act*, but a *habit*.

This is well illustrated in the Collect : which considers us under the paternal care of our heavenly Father ; growing up under his immediate eye, and trained by his directing hand, towards that *moral* perfection<sup>1</sup>, which is required of every man, accord-

<sup>1</sup> *Absolute* perfection is of course not attainable by man.

Hence the necessity of a *continual progress* in a holy course of life. However advanced the Christian may consider himself in knowledge or grace, he is never so far in advance, that he can safely stand still. He must still “*go on unto perfection.*” Thus spiritual pride is ef-

ing as his power shall be. Our *work* therefore, in striving to attain this state, *never ceases*, our hope and our endeavour must be, that as children of God, we may gain strength with our growth; and at last, though always imperfect of ourselves, may yet be “brought unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of *Christ*.” *Absolute* perfection is a measure, to which we can never reach; for St. Paul declares that he himself had *not* attained unto it. “*Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect*<sup>1</sup>.”

As, however, children grow up to full age under the care of earthly parents, so Christians grow up under the care of a *heavenly* Father. God doth “bring them up in his stedfast fear and love;” as parents bring up their children to reverence and to love them. If a child be rebellious, is not the voice of love justly changed into anger? If he forsake his father’s house, and become an alien to his family, a castaway; doth he not justly forfeit his inheritance? And shall not the same justice be awarded to the children of God? If they be disobedient, shall not the anger of their Father justly be upon them? If they forsake his house, become strangers to his family, and reprobate; shall not their inheritance be justly forfeited! The more seriously we meditate upon the relation we bear to God—as children to a parent,—the stronger shall we feel the necessity which lies upon us, of having on our own part “a

fectually checked. *Continual* watchfulness; *continual* exertion; *continual* self-denial; are the requisites for a Christian’s hope. “Let him take up his cross *daily*.”

<sup>1</sup> Philipp. iii. 12.

“perpetual fear and love of his holy name;” in order that we may encourage the stronger hope in his mercy, that, on his part he will “keep us under “the protection of his good providence.”

It were *unreasonable* indeed to *doubt* the protecting care, and kind providence of God. That he maketh the sun to shine, and the rain to fall, and fruitful seasons to return for the service of man, thus giving us richly all things to enjoy, argues an unceasing paternal care of his creatures. And if as a God of *providence*, he directs his doings in mercy, surely his mercy shines but still brighter, when we view him as a God of *grace*. He who gave his Son to be our sacrifice, will hardly withhold whatever other gift is for our *real* good. Having regenerated us by his Spirit in baptism, he will not fail daily to renew us by the same Spirit<sup>1</sup>, enabling us to please him both in will and deed. Therefore, what *evil* soever the *world* may bring, we are assured that *He* will turn all to *good*. Tribulation will train us for the kingdom, both of righteousness, and of glory<sup>2</sup>. Disappointment will mortify our pride; sorrow wean us from the world; calamity drive us to God. Keeping in view this his *paternal* character, we shall, by faith, comfort ourselves in sickness and sorrow, by remembering, that “whom the Lord loveth He “chasteneth, and scourgeth every son that he re- “ceiveth.” “As a man chasteneth his son, so the “Lord thy God chasteneth thee<sup>3</sup>.”

Hence the Psalmist's exclamation of gratitude

<sup>1</sup> Luke xi. 13. Refer to page 38 upon the necessity of our daily renovation by the Holy Spirit.

<sup>2</sup> Acts xiv. 22.

<sup>3</sup> Deut. viii. 5.

should be ours. "What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits towards me!" Surely, nothing less, than to "have a perpetual fear and love of his holy name." He is Lord of all things both in heaven and earth; he orders them according to his Will. Good cannot come to me, but through *him*: evil cannot harm me, unless by his permission. He hath power over life and death; and he will, *finally*, give just judgment to every man. "I say unto you, fear *Him*." *Such* fear is "the beginning of wisdom." Nay it is the support, the end of true wisdom; for it leadeth men to be wise unto salvation. Whoso thus feareth the Lord, "mercy embraceth him on every side."

With the *fear* of God as a heavenly Father, is united the *love* of him. Knowing that he demands our obedience "for our good always;" we cannot but love him with all our heart, and with all our soul, and with all our mind<sup>1</sup>. Now whoever thus fears and loves God, hates sin. A man cannot at the same time love light and darkness; virtue and vice; holiness and wickedness. And the Christian, having his view directed to God, finds these feelings of fear and love for which he prays, to be, under divine blessing, as a sword and a shield. They enable him to resist temptation to evil; "How shall I do this great evil, and sin against God?" So let the fear and love of God be active principles in *our* hearts. They will enable us to "bear all things—to endure all things—to hope all things"—for is not the hand which chasteneth, the hand of a father, who loveth

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xxii. 37.



us with an exceeding great love, and willeth that we be everlastingly saved; even though, like his Son, Jesus Christ, we pass through much tribulation? He is our *God*, and we will *fear* him. He is our *Father*, and we will *love* him.

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#### 45. THIRD SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

*O LORD, we beseech thee mercifully to hear us; and grant that we, to whom thou hast given an hearty desire to pray, may, by thy mighty aid, be defended and comforted in all dangers and adversities, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

WHOSO is called a *Christian*, should remember, that he is not, on account of this title, the less liable to “dangers and adversities.” As a *servant* of Christ, he must not expect to be above his suffering Lord. As a *soldier* of Christ, he must not expect to be exempt from the perils of a warfare, through which the great Captain of his salvation has led the way. His privilege is, not freedom from ills, but support under them<sup>1</sup>. He therefore prays, in the

<sup>1</sup> John xvii. 15. “I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.”

Thus the faithful servant of the Gospel is *not* to expect that because he is religious, therefore he is to be free from cares, and sorrows, and perplexities. He is taught, however, to expect grace, whereby he may *bear* them, with patience and resignation, and even with a holy joy. And by bearing them, himself unmoved, he virtually overcomes them. They do not alienate him from God.

Refer to page 215, and read the concluding part of the comment upon the Collect for Whitsunday.

language and spirit of the Collect, that if surrounded by dangers, he may be *defended* by the aid of the Lord ; if perplexed by adversities, he may be *comforted*.

But this “mighty aid” is not granted to a mere prayer of words. Many say “Lord, Lord,” who yet “enter not into the kingdom of heaven<sup>1</sup>.” The Collect concludes that our heavenly Father, “from whom all holy desires do proceed,” hath already given us “a hearty *desire* to *pray*.” Without this desire, words were fruitless ; submission, mockery ; and worship, vain. Desire is the very life of prayer ; bearing our petitions, as on wings, to the throne of grace, and inducing the Lord mercifully to hear us, for Jesus Christ, his sake. Better is it that we want words, wherewith to clothe our prayer, than the desire to pray : better that the overburdened heart want fit expression of its necessities, than with a fluent tongue to ask without sincerity. The unaccepted Pharisee had abundant power of expression<sup>2</sup>. He could fluently display his own excellencies, and qualify his petition to heaven, by referring to those parts of his conduct, which with a fond imagination he considered sufficiently strong in holiness—“I am *not as other men*.” But where was the heart ? It had centered all in self. It rose not to heaven. Wings were wanting to bear it thither : there was no desire

<sup>1</sup> Matt. vii. 21. “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven ; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.”

<sup>2</sup> *Pharisee*—is a name meaning “*separation*.” The Pharisees were a famous sect of the Jews : their prevailing sin was “Self-righteousness.”

of the soul after thee, O God. How different the Publican<sup>1</sup>! He probably was not behind the Pharisee in being just and true in his dealings with mankind, and in the strict observance of his outward duties. But he felt, that in the sight of God, no man living can be justified. He therefore sought help of the Lord with all his soul. But his prayer, deep-felt, heart-felt, could scarcely find utterance; and the words which did find utterance, were words of self-condemnation—"Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner." Yet "went *he* home *justified* rather than the other," for a hearty desire had winged his prayer and borne it even to the intercessor—who became, himself, justification to the suppliant. And where is he, that shall condemn whom God hath justified<sup>2</sup>? Our blessed Lord himself, is a striking proof of a hearty desire being accepted, where expression was wanting. Absorbed in deep anguish at the prospect of his heavy trial; bound as he was, heart and soul, to his heavenly Father; and knowing that the silent breathings of his spirit on earth, were all heard and registered in heaven—He poured out his feelings, but not in fluency of speech: unable to give utterance to the varied and contending emotions under which he suffered—"He prayed the third time, saying the *same* words<sup>3</sup>."

Were we thoroughly to examine our own hearts, we should perhaps find, that when any sudden distress has so overwhelmed us; any compunction un-

<sup>1</sup> *Publicans*—were persons appointed by the Romans to collect public taxes from the Jews. Hence, the Jews held them in abhorrence.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. viii. 33.

<sup>3</sup> Matt. xxvi. 44.

der a consciousness of sin so subdued us, that in our extremity we have been driven to God in prayer; *our* desire also hath been too fervent for utterance. We have fallen low on our knees before our heavenly Father; we have lifted up our hands to the hills whence cometh our salvation; we have looked, with upraised eyes, to him who dwelleth higher than the heavens; but words have been denied to us! We have poured out, *not* our *voice*, *but* our *heart* before God. Our whole soul has been one vast desire after the living God, as our only refuge from the storm. And have we not found consolation? Have not our petitions been answered in peace? The answer, like the prayer, has been silent, yet availing: for the clouds which hung over us, have been dispersed; we have been defended from all dangers, and comforted in all adversities. The Lord did “mercifully hear us.”

Whoso however would thus have his heart in a fit frame for prayer, when called to act in the more trying scenes of life, should *constantly* move in the true spirit of Christian soldiery, and live in *habitual* mental discipline. As the soldier prepares to meet, unmoved, sudden dangers in warfare, by regularity of discipline in time of peace—so do thou, O Christian, train thy soul for occasions of arduous trial, by a continual habit of prayer in the days of ease<sup>1</sup>. The

<sup>1</sup> When St. Paul tells us, to “pray without ceasing,” or St. Peter exhorts us, to “watch unto prayer,” we are not to understand either of these Apostles as urging upon us so exclusive and absorbing an intercourse with God, as to prevent a due observance of the duties incumbent upon us in our intercourse with men: their object is to enforce upon us the habit of spiritual discipline. As a soldier pre-

dangers of thy Christian course, come when or how they may, will then not alarm thee; nor its adversities, however heavy, overwhelm thee. Prayer will be thy constant, thy successful refuge; and thy God, a *present* help in trouble. “The Lord of hosts is “with thee;” “the God of Jacob is thy refuge”—a *defender* in all *dangers*, and in all *adversities* a *comforter*; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

prepares himself for action in times of danger, by regularity of exercise and discipline even in seasons of safety and repose; so the Christian is taught to prepare for the practical exercise of his various graces in seasons of unlooked-for severity of trial, by the habitual exercise of them in those hours of life, which peace and quiet may have blessed to him.

In this view of the subject, I would earnestly call your attention to the duty and advantage of *daily family devotion*. When your household, like Joshua and his house, “serve the Lord”—by daily reading together his holy word, and daily offering up with one accord their prayers for his Holy Spirit, they will be trained to guide their steps as under his all-seeing eye, and bear the severest visitations of his Providence with fortitude and resignation. When occasions may call them to act upon the principles, in the profession of which they live, they will prove a holy faith by a holy practice. They will bring into action, affections well trained by daily intercourse with God; spirits well disciplined by the daily study of the word of God; and views of the nature and character of this transitory life, already well regulated by the Spirit of God, for whose aid they daily pray. Thus, if they be called to suffering, however unjust, they meet their trial firmly: “It is the Lord! Let him do what seemeth him good.” Envy, hatred, and malice; the tongue of pride, and the voice of the slanderer, may come against them: but every trial is reconciled by the thought, that God, whom they serve, ruleth as “Head over all.” Come the arrow of affliction from what quiver it may; it reacheth not its mark without the permission of *Him*, who wounds only that we may seek *His* healing; and permits his faithful servants to endure severity of trial, to prove their soldiership, and reward their fidelity.



#### 46. FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

*O GOD, the Protector of all them that put their trust in thee, without whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy; increase and multiply upon us thy mercies, that thou being our Ruler and Guide, we may so pass through things temporal, that we finally lose not the things eternal; grant this, O heavenly Father, for Jesus Christ's sake our Lord. Amen.*

OF all the varied feelings of the mind, none is more fondly cherished by the Christian, than the feeling of safety under the protection of his Heavenly Father. In such a Protector he rejoices to trust unreservedly. The exertion of his own strength he considers, of itself, unavailing, though necessary. If he be strong ever to resist evil—if he be capable of holy thoughts; holy resolutions; holy actions—he refers his strength and holiness unto God; “without whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy.” As, therefore, the former Collect was a deep and heart-felt supplication, that God would defend and comfort us; *this* expresses our perfect *trust* in his protection, and petitions for an increase of it.

To see the full force of that part of the prayer, in which we implore God to “increase and multiply upon us his mercy;” we must view it in reference to the first part of the Collect, in which we address God as the “protector of them that *put their trust*”

in him: understanding also that the mercy here meant, is the mercy of protection. We must further bear in mind, that the degree of protection vouchsafed by God would seem to be regulated by the degree of faith in the supplicant; and our blessed Saviour shews us most plainly the success of an undoubting, and even importunate faith<sup>1</sup>. *Not that*

<sup>1</sup> Luke xi. 8—10. In this Scripture our Saviour, by a parable, encourages the weakest spirit to be watchful and persevering in prayer.

We learn moreover from the circumstances which on various occasions marked the benevolent exercise of our blessed Lord's power, that not only was faith required as a previous condition for the exercise of that power, but that the particular act of mercy was in some instances declared to depend for the extent of its efficacy, upon the degree of faith in the parties supplicating relief.

When he touched the eyes of the two blind men—Matt. ix. 29.—he accompanied his divine word with the condition on which it was to prove efficacious; “*according to your faith be it unto you.*” On another occasion—Matt. ix. 2.—when the people brought to him a man sick of the palsy, he healed him, both of his bodily and his spiritual infirmity, of his palsy, and his sin: but the express reason assigned for the latter act of grace was, the faith of *them* who brought to him the sufferer; “Jesus, seeing *their faith*, said unto the sick of “the palsy, Son, be of good cheer; thy sins are forgiven thee.” In St. Luke's Gospel, viii. 48. is another record in illustration of the power of faith. A woman had been healed of an infirmity by virtue of Him—Jesus Christ—the border of whose garment only she had touched, not doubting of relief. “Daughter,”—exclaimed the merciful and encouraging Saviour—“Daughter, be of good comfort: thy *faith* hath made thee *whole*; go in peace.” The same conditional efficacy of faith is distinctly stated to have restored the blind Bartimeus to his sight, Mark x. 52. and to have made the grateful leper whole; Luke xvii. 14.

This view of the subject tends to clear up the meaning of many passages in holy writ, where faith *seems* as if it were the very cause of our salvation, instead of the appointed condition of it. As when it is written—“the just shall live by faith”—faith is not their salvation, but He, in whom they fix their faith. So in the instances of

our faith can have *merit* to gain increase of mercy. But it leads us to *Him*, whose infinite merits may claim mercy for us all—as many as believe in him, and believing, obey him. Moreover, the exercise of faith, or of any other grace, has of itself a tendency to strengthen the soul, and render it capable—under the divine blessing—of still further exertion. Thus we are to understand the divine warnings ;—“ who-  
 “ soever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall  
 “ have more abundance : but whosoever hath not,  
 “ from him shall be taken away, even that he hath.” Our bodily powers, suffered to lie long dormant, gradually fail : whilst the man who exercises his frame, not only preserves, but strengthens the powers of his body. Exactly so the soul, if *torpid* or inactive—either loses or weakens its faculties ; if *active*—adds strength to strength. Much benefit accrues to us, from the habitual exercise of the Christian graces, even in the more trivial concerns of life. Such exercise prepares the soul to meet, without surprise, the greater occasions for the practice of duty. So great indeed are the beneficial effects of habitual

miraculous healing already adduced ; though Christ declares to each object of his mercy “ Thy faith hath made thee whole,” it is perfectly clear that faith was no otherwise the principle of healing, than as it was the principle of action which brought the sufferers to *Him*, who alone had power to heal all infirmities and to forgive all sin.

It is important that we make this distinction. A just feeling of it will lead us to such a hearty faith in his power to save us, that we shall seek him as our only Saviour. We shall humbly take up the prayer of the Apostles, and with them supplicate the Holy One—“ Lord, increase our faith ;” Luke xvii. 5. and be the more sincere and earnest in this prayer—trusting that in proportion as we are faithful, he will protect us for his truth and mercy’s sake.

obedience to the will of God, that called to exercise either the passive or active graces—called, to self-denial, or benevolence; to forgive an injury, or confer a benefit—every successive call to duty finds us the more ready to obey. Difficulties vanish before a resolved, and well-trained mind. Decision is success. And the mercy of God is *increased* and *multiplied* upon his servants, in proportion as they lend their humble endeavours to render themselves capable of receiving such increase, and ready to benefit by it.

*Our* part is, to be faithful; trusting that our ruler will both guide and protect us. We, like the chosen of old, have a weary wilderness to pass through, ere we gain our land of promise: but like them, we have a divine hand to direct us. They found difficulties: they found also relief. The waters of the sea were before them; and the army of Pharaoh behind them: but a way was opened for their preservation. The God in whom they trusted, was their protection. And the same protection will be ours, if we have the same trust.

As the necessities of Israel increased, and their difficulties multiplied, so did God “increase and “multiply upon them his mercy.” They were an hungred, and he fed them with manna; giving them angels’ food<sup>1</sup>. They were thirsty—he opened the

<sup>1</sup> Psalm lxxviii. 24, 25. or, as it is written in the margin of our Bible “The Bread of the mighty.”

Amongst other remarkable circumstances, which proved this manna to be miraculous food, and distinguished it from the honeyed substance which not unfrequently in eastern countries falls upon the earth; *This* is conspicuous—that whilst the quantity daily ga-

hard rock, and rivers ran in dry places. They had no change of clothing—he caused that their clothing “waxed not old upon them, forty years<sup>1</sup>.” Surely thus the Lord dealeth with *us* also. Are we an hungred?—The bread of life eternal—the hidden manna<sup>2</sup>—in never failing abundance, is free to us all. Are we thirsty?—All may drink “of the fountain of life freely.” Do we feel ourselves unfit to stand in his presence, clothed in our own unrighteousness?—Do we require some covering for

thered on the five first days of the week, was not sweet or fit for food on the day after it was gathered; *That* which was gathered on the sixth day continued in a fit state for food during the seventh day. Thus there was a double miracle. The supply, throughout, was miraculous: but the order of the miracle was changed, and an especial provision made in reference to the seventh day: the Almighty himself resting even from his bounty on *that* day, in order that the people might have no plea for disturbing the sanctity of the Sabbath, and that the Church throughout all ages might know the Sabbath, as hallowed to the Lord.

It is impossible to feel properly upon this subject, without cherishing a more holy regard to, and honouring by a more strict and reverential observance, that holy day, the sanctity of which was then so signally proclaimed.

<sup>1</sup> Deut. viii. 4. The exhortation in this chapter is well termed by Bishop Sanderson, “a warn-word against unthankfulness.” After an affectionate but vain appeal to the gratitude of the favoured people, as a powerful motive for their obedience to God, Moses denounces the divine vengeance upon their ingratitude in a strain so sublime, and, unhappily, so prophetic, that as we meditate upon the fulfilment of the denunciation, our reflections return to our own bosoms; and we cannot but be conscious, that the same God who required grateful obedience from his people of old, requires the same from us now: and that the Being, who has scattered *them* to the four winds of heaven in their disobedience, lives to take vengeance upon *us*—if we also forget the Lord; *their* God, and *our* God.

<sup>2</sup> Rev. ii. 17.



our sins which our hands cannot devise, and which time shall not destroy?—He hath prepared for us the robe of the righteousness of Christ, which his grace will supply to us, and which waxeth not old for ever. Nay, let the aged Christian tell, that as, in the pilgrimage of life, his necessities, spiritual or even temporal, have increased, and his difficulties multiplied; so hath the Lord increased and multiplied upon him his mercy. If evils have not been removed—sufficient grace has been given to bear them. For though our heavenly Father may see it absolutely necessary, for perfecting us in holiness, that we pass through much tribulation, he will not desert us, so long as we hold fast our faith. In proportion to our trust in his mercy, through Christ, and our endeavours to lead a holy life according to the grace given us—so will he prove in all dangers our protector; and in all necessities our refuge. Whoso then amongst us feareth the Lord—“let him “trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his “God<sup>1</sup> ;” in the animating hope, that he “being “our ruler and guide, we may so pass through “things temporal, that we finally lose not the things “eternal.”

<sup>1</sup> Isaiah l. 10. The Prophet in this chapter presents to us a short, but noble exhortation to a *perfect trust in God*.

## 47. FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

*GRANT, O Lord, we beseech thee, that the course of this world may be so peaceably ordered by thy governance, that thy Church may joyfully serve thee in all godly quietness, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

To strengthen our faith in offering up this prayer on behalf of the Church, we may review the more signal instances of power displayed by the Almighty in preserving those, who, from time to time, have constituted his Church. Nor shall we find any subject, in the whole range of enquiry, so replete with high interest, or affording ground for more solid comfort to the serious and reflecting mind.

Since the fall of man, every dispensation of God, as it has affected the moral and political government of the world, has had ultimately in view the establishment of his spiritual kingdom by Jesus Christ: and to effect this purpose, he has uniformly secured to himself a peculiar people.

In Noah, in Abraham, in the Patriarchs, the Church was successively preserved by Jehovah, as his chosen *family*. In the days of their descendants, it assumed the more important character of his chosen *nation*<sup>1</sup>, holding the worship of the true God. A nation, whose history is not less striking

<sup>1</sup> Deut. iv. 34. and 1 Chron. xvii. 21.

for the peculiarities of its own state, than interesting from its important bearings on the different kingdoms with which it has been connected<sup>1</sup>.

As the patriarchal tribes increased, grew up into a mighty people, and settled in their land of promise, it excites no wonder to find, that their religious government continued undisturbed. The wonder is this—that it remained unchanged at their decline. Severe as were the captivities of the Jews, and various the kings who were permitted to be lords over them, yet, as they preserved the true religion, God did defend that religion for his own sake<sup>2</sup>, whilst he permitted them to be punished for their offences. The fall therefore of their political power, did not subject *them*, as was usual with other fallen nations, to the religion of their conquerors. Amid the madness of superstition—amid conflicting interests—amid the convulsions attending political change—the *Ark* stood in its *safety*. No unhalloed hand removed it. The cloud of defence rested upon it.

Under the Assyrian monarchy, the hand of heaven

<sup>1</sup> Many were the peculiarities attending the religious and civil government of the chosen nation. Thus “God was their King;” 1 Sam. xii. 12. till, in an evil hour, they importunately claimed a king from among men. During however the paternal government of *God*, as their *King*, he regulated by Moses and his successors, not only the proceedings of the *Church* of Israel, but their policy; appointing laws, and enjoining regulations for the safety of their *civil* institutions, as well as for the good ordering of their *religious* observances.

See a note in the Comment upon the Collect for the eighth Sunday after Trinity.

<sup>2</sup> Ezek. xx. 9. “But I wrought for my name’s sake.”

was displayed in favour of the chosen. Though in the captive's heart was no responsive melody, as he remembered the well-loved songs of Sion; yet by the streams of Babylon did he still commune with his God, and soften his heart to repentance. Many were the signs by which Jehovah even then declared that *He* was their God, and they his people. In their captivity, a prophet was raised up unto them—even Daniel: and who so great as he, in the kingdom of Babylon? Vast regions separated them from their temple; but their worship remained: and God was with them still.

With a change of conquerors came an *improved* change of condition. After the overthrow of Belshazzar, Cyrus, his conqueror, not only continued to the captive people of Israel their privileges under the Persian empire, but restored them to their home; and, according to Isaiah's prediction, laid again the foundation of the temple, in the land of their forefathers<sup>1</sup>.

Even Alexander, upon his accession to the Grecian monarchy, flushed as he was with conquest, and prepared to exercise unusual severity against Jerusalem, changed his purpose as he approached the sacred city, and at last worshipped with the High-Priest in the temple of Jehovah.

No sooner were they brought under the dominion of Rome, than they were permitted a full enjoyment of their religious rites. Their temple was held sacred, its offerings allowed, its worshippers protected. And these privileges continued; until, as a people upon

<sup>1</sup> Refer to page 219.

whom was the blood of the Saviour<sup>1</sup>, they had filled up the measure of their iniquity: *then* God swept away their temple and their power<sup>2</sup>—declared that

<sup>1</sup> The awful fulfilment of the curse, which the Jews called down upon themselves, cannot be contemplated without affording a most striking practical admonition. When the thrilling imprecation—"his blood be on *us*, and on our *children*"—resounded through the judgment-hall, they who uttered it, little thought how soon the portion they chose for themselves, should be allotted them—that, ere another generation passed, the children should perish, victims to their Fathers' curse; and mingled in the dreadful overthrow of Jerusalem, should avenge by their own unparalleled slaughter and suffering, their crucified Messiah. But these enemies of Christ, having once set their minds to destroy him, permitted no consideration to check them. Even the assertion of his Judge—"I find *no fault* in him"—weighed not with them. They readily made any sacrifice to satisfy their heart's lust. They welcomed even perdition, so that they could accomplish their desire.

We learn hence, the tremendous risk a man runs, who pursues any unlawful object. The suggestions of conscience may arise to check him; the Holy Spirit may itself strive with him; but if he be obstinately bent upon attaining his object, reckless of what consequences may result from it—going through any wickedness rather than give up the pursuit of unlawful gain which he covets; of power, which is to feed his pride; or of pleasure, which is to minister to his lusts—if he be thus set upon the attainment of evil; *then*, as St. Paul most fearfully warns him, he "crucifies the Son of God afresh;" and every wish he cherishes for the accomplishment of his sinful purposes, is virtually, an echo as it were, of the imprecation of the Jews. Curse and not blessing must rest upon his deliberate sin; and he, who repents him not of the evil, falls, like the once-loved city, a prey to the fierceness of the enemy, and a monument both of the misery of sin, whose end is destruction; and of the power and justice of God, who whilst he pardons the penitent, avenges him of his enemies, and vindicates at once his justice and his power.

<sup>2</sup> Jerusalem was taken and destroyed by the Romans in the year of our Lord 70. The various prophecies respecting its siege and fall were fulfilled most minutely; and as the history of their fulfilment is recorded by Josephus, a Jewish historian, and an *enemy* to



all mankind should be his people in Jesus Christ—and shadowing as well by his grace, as by his power, the world itself, willed, that there should be respect of persons no longer—no longer respect or distinction of a particular nation, as before the advent of Christ; but that the good of every nation, Jew or Gentile, should be free to be accepted into his family, through Jesus Christ his Son <sup>1</sup>.

But who seeth not that the divine hand protected the ark of God, whilst it was entrusted to the care of his chosen people in old time? And who can doubt, but that the same hand has since been its effectual protector, amid the enemies which have on every side surrounded it? From the day in which Christ entrusted it to his Church, to the moment in which we offer up the Collect before us, it hath ever experienced signal deliverance in the time of need. Hath not then the incarnate God redeemed his pledge—"I am with you *always*?"

With this his promise fixed in our hearts, and in full remembrance of his past dealings in favour of his true religion—let us, each, go on our way rejoicing. The defence of the Church itself, is a defence of *each* individual of the same; even of the reader of these pages. Take heed, that your heart be right before God: *then*—whether your days glide in peace, or your hours drag on heavily, laden with

*Christianity*, the agreement of history and prophecy, thus drawn, remains an incontrovertible proof of the divine truth of the prophecies themselves.

<sup>1</sup> Acts x. 34, 35. Thus also was accomplished the word of God spoken by Isaiah lvi. 7. "Mine house shall be called an house of "prayer for *all* people."

sorrow—know, that you are equally, at all times, and under all circumstances, under the protection of *Omnipotence* ; of a Being, who can control all things in heaven and earth ; whose power is only equalled by his mercy ; and who both in his power and his mercy, is by covenant through Christ, your Father and your God. Let your trust in *His* protection be *unshaken*. Rest assured, that he will defend you, and that the prayer of this Collect, if offered up with sincerity and fervour, will be answered—“ the “ course of this world will ” now, as heretofore “ be “ so peaceably ordered by God’s governance,” that his “ Church,” collectively and individually, “ may “ joyfully serve him in all godly quietness ; through “ Jesus Christ our Lord.”



#### 48. SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

*O GOD, who hast prepared for them that love thee, such good things as pass man’s understanding ; pour into our hearts such love towards thee, that we, loving thee above all things, may obtain thy promises, which exceed all that we can desire, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

THERE is an instinctive desire in man to look into futurity. To direct this desire aright, was the object of our blessed Lord in his several discourses upon the subject of a future state. He spoke of it in *general* terms, or in figurative expressions. The world of Spirits is shadowed out as an unknown

world, upon which the human mind may be engaged, from age to age, and still find ample room for exercise. "The fire" indeed, "which cannot be quenched," and "the worm which dieth not," are terms sufficiently particular to designate the never-ending extremity of torment, prepared for the impenitent. Yet, when the rewards of holiness are to be set forth, the most general terms are used. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." Therefore, whilst enough is revealed to satisfy faith, which is confessedly the evidence of things *not* seen, a *vain* and *low* curiosity is *checked*; our thoughts are raised above considerations of this world; and we are elevated from the earth, which we inhabit, to Him, who made that earth and its inhabitants.

How merciful, as well as wise, to deter us from evil, by objects so evidently painful, even in the apprehension of them, that we at once shrink from the hazard of encountering them; and to encourage us to good, by objects, which though *undefined* as to their nature and extent, are of a heavenly character; sanctifying us in our contemplation and anticipation of them, and powerfully calling into action every nobler faculty of the mind, every better feeling of the heart; without limit to their exercise, yet with safety to the soul.

Thus too the false notions which worldly men entertain of those objects which they imagine to constitute happiness, are wisely corrected; not by uprooting altogether the spirit of ambition, or the love of ease, or the capacity of enjoyment, or the

desire of knowledge ; but by leading men to direct their view to objects, worthy the aim of an immortal soul. The riches of the grace of God ; the Rest which remaineth in heaven for the people of God ; the pleasures which are at God's right hand for evermore ; the knowledge of God, and the promised vision of him, face to face ; the crown of glory, and a share of the kingdom of heaven—*These* are the objects upon the attainment of which, religion permits the mind to dwell—These the good things, which pass man's understanding, and which God hath prepared for them that love him. And where is there a Spirit so high set, whose ambition such good things might not equal ! The most aspiring cannot wish for more than a crown of glory, which fadeth not ; the most ambitious cannot aim higher than a kingdom, which knoweth neither end nor change.

Thus, by a merciful consideration of our infirmities, even our imagination, the most restless and dangerous faculty of the mind, has full scope in this *shadowy* region of futurity ; and, by the aid of religion, finds the exercise of its powers permitted, and conducted to good. An unbounded field is opened, wherein it may freely and safely expatiate. There St. Paul delighted to range, in all the uncontrolled liberty wherewith Christ had made him free, as an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven. He had already so realized to himself the joys that shall be, that although he was at peace with God and man in this world <sup>1</sup>, he longed to burst the veil, which screened

<sup>1</sup> Acts xxiv. 16.

him from immortality—and “to be for ever with the “Lord<sup>1</sup>.” “With me, to *live*, is *Christ*; but to *die*, is gain<sup>2</sup>.”

It were well that *we* likewise encouraged ourselves to duty—exalted our minds, and dignified our characters, by looking forward to the *same* transporting scenes—holding fast the blessed hope, that for *us* also, God “hath prepared such good things as pass “man’s understanding.”

But the good we look to enjoy hereafter, like that which we pray for here, must be a *conditional* gift. God’s favour, either in this world, or in the next, is for those who *love* him. And lest any man deceive himself with a *vain* notion of loving God when his heart is far from him, our Collect proposes a sure test of sincerity: that “*we love Him above all “things.*”

In every human being, there is a desire for some earthly object, to which his *chief* regard would be paid, were he to follow the guidance of his nature: riches, or power, or some other object than God. The rich and eager candidate for the Gospel<sup>3</sup>, when he found he must trust no more in his riches, but “love God above all things,” lost at once his energy, desire, and even acquiescence. He did *not* love God above riches, and therefore could not enter into the promises of the Gospel. In all such cases, our rule of action is plainly laid down for us by *Him*, who knew our infirmities; who felt them; and had compassion upon them; “Seek ye *first* the kingdom “of God.” If God be the *chief* object, all other

<sup>1</sup> 1 Thess. iv. 17.

<sup>2</sup> Phil. i. 21.

<sup>3</sup> Matt. xix. 16—22.



objects will take only a proper degree of our attention. If *He* be in all our thoughts, His image—though only so reflected—will sanctify and bless us. If *He* be the first object of our contemplation, the first aim of our ambition, the first wish of our heart, we are gainers under the loss of every inferior object. St. Paul counted all things but lost—if so he might win Christ<sup>1</sup>.

Who then shall think religion to be a check upon the energies of the mind? We find her calling into action, and turning to good, even the *imagination*—that highest, most ethereal of our faculties! A faculty, which, when absorbed by worldly objects, weakens us for the duties of our calling, both in social and spiritual life; and destroys those powers, which if duly exercised, had worked out our own salvation. Nor can it ever be safely let free, except upon those prospects of futurity, which the Gospel opens to us, and to which the Collect would conduct us. There, indeed, it finds safe and full scope for its best powers; ample space for its widest range; for infinity is the only limit to its excursions; and its object is, the inconceivable glories of the everlasting God.

<sup>1</sup> Phil. iii. 8.

## 49. SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

*LORD of all power and might, who art the author and giver of all good things; graft in our hearts the love of thy name, increase in us true religion, nourish us with all goodness, and of thy great mercy keep us in the same, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

IT would be difficult to find a prayer of human composition, more beautiful than *this*—spiritual in its petitions; illustrative in its style; and comprehensive in its sentiments.

The *address*, with which it opens, implies that the supplicant's heart is strong, both in gratitude and faith. He is *grateful* for his preservation and for all other blessings, temporal and spiritual. He is *faithful*, from the recollection of deliverance from past dangers and necessities. To the Lord therefore he flees, as his strength under present trials, and his sure refuge for the future. The "Lord of all power and might, who is the author and giver of all good things," is his fortress and deliverer.

The *petitions* which follow the address, are such as best become beings, whose chief object ought to be—the welfare of their souls. They are *spiritual* petitions: to which, if to any, we may hope the divine promise to be applicable—"Whatsoever ye shall ask *in my name*, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son <sup>1</sup>." The promise,

<sup>1</sup> John xiv. 13. (Refer to the note, page 53.)

thus guarded, plainly directs us to ask nothing, inconsistent with the honour of *Him*, whose kingdom is *not* of *this* world; and who does not mark his favour, by dispensing its advantages.

The *order* in which the petitions are placed, is in beautiful agreement with the figurative language adopted in them. The growth of an engrafted bough, from its first union with the stem of the tree, is not only gradual, but different in different trees; and varying according to different soils, different climates, and different opportunities of gaining requisite nourishment. So is it with the engrafted word upon our souls<sup>1</sup>. Its growth is gradual—and brings forth fruit, some an hundred, some sixty, some thirty

<sup>1</sup> Though the blessings of the Gospel—its power and its privileges, its gifts and its conditions—are represented in the Holy Scripture under every variety of figure, and by every mode of illustration, the younger reader must yet bear in mind, that figurative language and illustration, are not intended as proof of divine truth: for it frequently happens, that a comparison which admirably illustrates a doctrine, cannot be so complete, as to prove it. Thus in the sublime address of St. Paul, 1 Cor. xv. 36, 37, upon the subject of death; however the affecting force of it is endeared to us by its adoption into the Church service for the dead; the comparison by which he would illustrate the doctrine of the resurrection of the body, does not hold good throughout; though it is sufficient for his purpose of explanation. He had before asserted the doctrine, and proved its truth. He had already shown that as Jesus Christ did die and rise again the first fruits of them who slept—so the possibility of the resurrection of the body was *proved*; and all he adds by way of illustration, is only to show the reasonableness of bending our Faith to believe in spiritual things what may be incomprehensible, by appealing to our faith in those incomprehensible facts in the natural world, which none but the fool would disbelieve.

This is a plain, but an important distinction to be remembered, when we read the sacred oracles of God. See note, p. 227.

fold—the produce required, being proportioned to the advantages vouchsafed <sup>1</sup>.

“Graft in our hearts the *love* of thy name.” As a flourishing graft brings forth good fruit; so the Christian brings forth the fruit of a holy and religious life, with peace and joy. Love to any object, renders all service easy, when undertaken for the sake of that object. When therefore the *object* of our love is *God*—an object dignifying and sanctifying the affection it calls forth—how much rather should we consider labour, ease; self-denial, enjoyment; and even afflictions, joy <sup>2</sup>; if we be called thereto, in proof of our love! If this be our principle of action, we should esteem ourselves never so rich, as when blessed with the riches of his grace; never so free, as when serving him, “whose service”—for do we not love him?—“is *perfect* freedom.” This feeling is to be cherished “with all our heart, and with all “our mind, and with all our strength.” Neither is there any surer guard against allurements to evil: for other affections are absorbed in this. Being “grafted inwardly in our hearts,” it becomes a part of ourselves, as the engrafted bud becomes a part of the stem whereon it grows. This engrafted love to God is a living, an enduring principle, which flourishes as the never-failing spring of courage and fortitude, of resignation and contentment, in doing the will of God. Called therefore to duty, we are ever ready, either to meet difficulties with courage, or to endure afflictions with fortitude. We are

<sup>1</sup> Luke xii. 48. “For unto whomsoever much is given, of him “shall much be required.”

<sup>2</sup> James i. 2. and v. 11.

reconciled to our service, however arduous and toilsome, by the consciousness that we serve, whom we love.

“Increase in us true religion.” We may reasonably hope, that as the love of God grows in our hearts, its fruit will the more *abound*. *True* religion will be *increased*. No longer contented with the *form* only of godliness, we shall add thereto the *power* of it. *Sincere* in worship; *true* and just in all our dealings; no insincerity towards our fellow-creatures; no lukewarmness towards our God; our devotion will be fervent, and our charity sincere. The fruits of our life—faith, hope, and charity—will evidence themselves as the fruits of the spirit. But this increase of holiness is the *gift* of *God*, who equally in the spiritual and the natural world, “is the author and giver of all good things.” We therefore implore *his* fostering aid.

“Nourish us with all goodness, and of thy great mercy keep us in the same.” In this spirit of dependence, and under this figure of speech, our Church in another part of her liturgy, addresses the Almighty on behalf of her ministers and people; beseeching him “to pour upon them the continual *dew* of his blessing.” And surely as a cloud of dew refresheth a weary land in the heat of harvest<sup>1</sup>, so the divine blessing refresheth a weary soul, in the fiery time of trial; calmly indeed, and imperceptibly—yet *effectually*. “I will be as the *dew* unto Israel:” saith Jehovah, “he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots like Lebanon<sup>2</sup>.”

<sup>1</sup> Isaiah xviii. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Hosea xiv. 5.



To whom can we look, but unto God, “to keep us in the same state as living plants, giving their due “increase of true religion?” As he first “grafts in “our hearts the love of his name,” through his mercy in Christ Jesus; so if we cultivate the heart with all diligence, and nourish the love of God there engrafted, by devout meditation, by holy resolutions, by active piety, and above all by watchfulness unto prayer for “the dew of his blessing”—he will *keep* us in his true religion,—and make us to flourish, like trees planted by the water side, giving fruit in due season, even fruit unto holiness—the end whereof is life eternal.



## 50. EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

*O GOD, whose never-failing providence ordereth all things both in heaven and earth; we humbly beseech thee to put away from us all hurtful things, and to give us those things which be profitable for us, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

“WHAT is man, that thou art mindful of him?” enquired the admiring David, when he “considered “the *heavens*, the work of God’s hand, the moon “and the stars, which he hath ordained.” But wonder ceased, when he considered also, that the *earth*, with all things therein, was likewise ordained for the service of man. Under this *twofold* view of the Almighty, the Psalmist’s reflections end, not in

enquiry, but in faith and praise. “O Lord! *our* “Lord! how excellent is thy name in all the earth <sup>1</sup>.”

If *David* had confidence in the providence of the Almighty, surely we have still stronger grounds for *our* confidence! the same Being it is, who for nearly three thousand years since the Psalmist’s time, has day by day ordered the heavens in their course, and the earth in its seasons. We feel that no less a power than Omnipotence could sustain the heavens: and we know, from the express declaration of our blessed Lord, that by the same Omnipotence the minutest parts of creation are supported and regarded. Not a sparrow “is forgotten before God;” and “even the very hairs of our head are all numbered <sup>2</sup>.” May we not then very justly address him in the firm language of our Collect, as the “God, whose *never-failing* providence ordereth all “things both in heaven and earth!”

Having faith in the *infinite power* of our God, displayed in this, his never-failing providence; we humbly beseech him, “to put away from us all “hurtful things, and to give us all those things “which be profitable for us.” And we trust that our petition will be granted, because it is offered in the name and through the merits of Jesus Christ; who has left us his promise, “whatsoever ye shall “ask the Father in my name, he will give it you <sup>3</sup>.” If at any time therefore we think that our prayers are not answered, let us acknowledge our thought to be vain. “It is our infirmity.” The prayer—if it

<sup>1</sup> Psalm viii. 9.

<sup>2</sup> Luke xii. 6, 7. Refer to note, page 59.

<sup>3</sup> John xvi. 23. See the note upon this passage, page 53.

be such as a penitent may offer through his Redeemer—is answered. We cannot always understand the answer, because we cannot sufficiently understand, what “things be hurtful”—what “things profitable for us.” We are too apt to consider worldly success as our profit; worldly disappointment as our hurt; and estimate accordingly the answer to our petitions. To correct this fatal error, let us retire for a season to our chamber; commune with our hearts in the stillness thereof; and bend our proud spirit to the confession, that whatsoever furthers an immortal soul in its progress towards a happy immortality—*that* is profitable: whatsoever draws it back, *that* is hurtful. Thus to a convinced and converted heart “old things are passed away; “behold! all things are become new<sup>1</sup>.” The cross is no longer esteemed hurtful, but profitable, since we find that in bearing it with the resignation which becomes followers of the meek and lowly Jesus, we are in the way which leadeth unto life; supported under our burden, by the heavenly, but conditional hope, that, “*if* so be we *suffer* with him, we may be “also *glorified* together<sup>2</sup>.”

It is a truth, however, of which every thinking mind will feel the force, that we are unwilling to know what is really good for us. In numerous instances we strangely mistake what constitutes happiness<sup>3</sup>. How often, when we have failed of some

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. v. 17.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. viii. 17.

<sup>3</sup> For many ages God was himself both the spiritual, and *temporal* king of his chosen people Israel. But when, in a debased spirit of worldliness, they prayed that “they also might be like all nations,” and be judged by men like themselves; “rejecting God,

seeming good, and lamented our failure; future circumstances have convincingly proved to us, that, if attained, it had been our ruin. We know but little of probable events: we know less of their probable effect upon ourselves, or how we should act in situations hitherto new to us. Even if what we grasp at, be in itself a blessing when rightly used, we are hardly aware how far we might turn it into a curse by an improper use of it. If we pray for the comforts of competence and ease, and still find ourselves poor and distressed, we are not therefore to suppose God hath not heard, or not regarded our petition. He doubtless knows that our present state is most *profitable* for our *salvation*, consequently most *truly* profitable. He who in his omniscience knoweth our thoughts long before, knoweth also that if we were rich and prosperous, we should perhaps be-

“that *He* should *not* reign over them,” 1 Sam. viii. 7—God granted their request. But he granted it in his *anger*. The people ceased to have the Lord God for their King.

The circumstances attending this event are recorded with a striking minuteness, that we might more diligently take heed to the instruction they convey. We are awfully warned, when we pray for blessing, to leave to the wisdom of Omnipotence the *mode* by which the blessing should be conveyed. If we are earnest only for some or other *worldly* good, and covet *earthly* things; hoping, with those rebellious sons of Israel, that if we gain our wish “we also may be like all nations”—like the ambitious world around us—may we not justly fear lest God grant the petition in anger, and what we look forward to as blessing, prove to us a curse. Whereas, by trusting to Him, to give us what *He* knows to be *truly* profitable for us; and contentedly receiving whatever of worldly good, or worldly ill, he may be pleased to send us, we may reasonably hope, that he will “put away from us all hurtful things, and give us those things which be profitable for us, through Jesus Christ our Lord.”—Refer to the first note in page 251.

come covetous and worldly; should be selfish in our enjoyments; and think, in the pride of our heart, “*mine* hand, and *mine* arm hath gotten me the victory.” Better in life be a patient Lazarus, and rest after death in Abraham’s bosom, than a wicked Dives, surrounded in this world with every luxury; and “in hell, lifting up our eyes in torments:” “tormented in that flame<sup>1</sup>!”

<sup>1</sup> Luke xvi. 19—31. *Lazarus* was rewarded, not because he was poor, but because being poor, he was resigned to the will of God in all *humility*. In the hour of his distress let the poor man remember Lazarus; and without murmur, or repining, let him contentedly resign himself to the will of God. It is God who maketh rich and poor—the Lord is the Maker of them all.

*Dives* was punished, not because he was rich; but because he “*trusted* in his riches;” made a bad use of them—neglected to lay up a treasure in heaven; and took no care for his soul.

*Abraham* was also rich—he was a mighty man in power and wealth—yet he was rewarded, because he made a good use of his riches, and esteemed the favour of God, the pearl of highest price. The very bliss, by the enjoyment of which Lazarus was rewarded, is represented as a reclining in Abraham’s bosom.

Thus rich and poor meet together in heaven, as well as on earth, if according to their several stations, they serve the Lord faithfully, and “keep his commandments to do them.”

It is worthy of observation, that Dives—in the midst of his pain, and under all the anxiety under which he labours on behalf of his surviving brethren, “lest they also come into this place of torment”—utters *no complaint*. This part of the parable teaches us, that in another world men will have so clear a perception of the character of God, that even the guilty will not murmur at their punishment. Even they will tacitly confess the justice of the Judge.

Under the same view of the justice of God, neither Lazarus, nor Abraham, speak ought of sorrow, or compassion. Abraham, who once interceded importunately for the cities of the plain, is silent now. So the Being, who at the right hand of God is our intercessor in these days of grace, will in a future state not intercede for us, but award, with unshrinking justice, life or death eternal.



Let our prayer then for such blessings as earth can afford us, be guarded by a reference to the united wisdom and mercy of our heavenly Father; that, grant what he will, and deny what he may, he would yet vouchsafe the two chiefest blessings, which *we* can ask, or even *He* can give—"granting us in *this* " world knowledge of his truth; and in the *world to come*, life everlasting<sup>1</sup>."

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## 51. NINTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

*GRANT to us, Lord, we beseech thee, the Spirit to think and do always such things as be right-ful; that we, who cannot do any thing that is good without thee, may by thee be enabled to live according to thy will, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

THE chief point to which this Collect directs our attention, is the connexion between thought and action. It is highly important that we rightly understand the nature of this connexion: for in our fallen state, even good thoughts are not always followed by corresponding good actions. The enemy—who could sow tares in the wheat<sup>2</sup>—will often in-

<sup>1</sup> Part of the beautiful prayer, written by St. Chrysostom, and adopted by the framers of our Liturgy, as the closing prayer in the Morning and Evening Service.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. xiii. 25. The plant here mentioned as the tare, is not the tare usually grown in our fields, as serviceable food for cattle; but a variety of that species, and known as the *wild*, or *strangle* tare.

fuse the bitterness of sin into the progress of our thoughts, unless we vigilantly guard against him. It should be remembered, that between the first thought, either of good or evil, and its accomplishment, there is always *some* interval; though the duration of it will vary with the nature of the circumstances in which we may be placed. To employ this interval aright, is one of the chief duties of Christian watchfulness; both in resisting our thoughts, if they be evil; and in encouraging them, if they be good.

No man may say, that evil suggestions shall not come across his mind. But every Christian can resolve—*not* to give up his attention to them; *not* to entertain them; *not* to allow of their abiding with him—because he has the promise of divine grace to assist him in resisting and overcoming them<sup>1</sup>. He will moreover consider, that every moment of encouragement to a sinful thought, strengthens it for action. Whenever we pause with a view of reconciling evil suggestions, or entering into compromise

When growing alone, it is a weak and insignificant plant, but when growing with wheat, becomes strong and tall; clinging by its tendrils to the wheat: by which means it *strangles*, as it were, and destroys whole fields of corn. Having the appearance of a good plant, but productive only of evil, it was significantly spoken of by our Lord, as representing hypocrites in particular, and the wicked in general.

Our blessed Saviour thus also prepares us to expect that in his Church, for ever, there should be the wicked with the good—tares with the wheat. To a conviction of this truth, how often must the labourers in God's vineyard refer, if they would not be discouraged by that growth of evil, which, but for the superintending care and providence of God, must utterly defeat their labour, and disgrace their husbandry. Refer to page 136.

<sup>1</sup> Matt. vii. 7.

with them, we work our own destruction. We foster in our bosom a scarcely-formed serpent; which is harmless and easily crushed in its first state, but which, when older grown, and invigorated by care and warmth, gains fatal power to wound; and strikes as its *first* victim, the breast which cherished it. Therefore, if the enemy be permitted to put into our minds evil thoughts, as trials of our faith—let us, at once, away with them. In patience indeed, let us “submit ourselves to God,” even under the severest trials of our Christian fortitude; but let us in all fidelity “resist the devil, and he will flee from us.” Let us, in a noble spirit of decision, adopt the commanding language of our blessed Master; “get thee hence, Satan.” Let us “worship the Lord our God, and him only serve.” Then may we hope to find peace and comfort, though our souls be wearied. If we “draw nigh unto God; *He*”—who is the God of all consolation—“will draw nigh unto us<sup>1</sup>.” Then also we may reasonably hope, that if we cannot always think what is good, we may never encourage what is evil; but may be so strengthened by grace in the inner man, that though struggling with the wicked suggestions of our spiritual foe, and with the still more dangerous delusions of our own hearts, we may at last conquer; and gain—even through the trial, and tribulation, and anguish of a spiritual warfare—the power “to *do* what is *rightful*.”

Our *first* care then is, to guard the heart, whence comes the *first* spring of thought. Our *next* care is,

<sup>1</sup> James iv. 7, 8.

to watch that a good thought may be neither checked nor removed, by any after-suggestion of the tempter; but may be encouraged, and thereby strengthened into a good action. To this end, however, let us seek other strength than our own:—and since—as the Collect well reminds us—we “cannot do any “thing that is good, *without* God;” let us beseech him to grant us his *Spirit*, “to think and do always “such things as be rightful.” To whom else indeed should we go? It is the “Spirit which helpeth our “infirmities<sup>1</sup>,” and supplieth whatever we need of wisdom, strength, or comfort<sup>2</sup>. This is that “Spirit “of wisdom” which enableth us to know, by happy experience, “what is the exceeding greatness of his “power to us-ward who believe<sup>3</sup>.” It is by the self-same Spirit of comfort, that “we abound in hope, “and are filled with all joy and peace in believing.” *Without* this Spirit, we are ignorant, powerless, and comfortless: *by* Him, we have comfort, strength, and wisdom: enabled either to reject what is evil, or to think and do what is rightful; and to seek the gracious favour of our God and Father, by “living according to *His* will; through Jesus Christ our “Lord.”

<sup>1</sup> Rom. viii. 26.

<sup>2</sup> Comment for Whit-Tuesday.

<sup>3</sup> Ephes. i. 19.

## 52. TENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

*LET thy merciful ears, O Lord, be open to the prayers of thy humble servants; and that they may obtain their petitions, make them to ask such things as shall please thee, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

THE particular expressions applied, in this Collect, both to God and ourselves, are appropriately and beautifully selected. *He* is styled the *merciful*: *We*, his *humble servants*. No degree of mercy, less than his own infinite mercy, would bend to the prayers of weak and frail beings like ourselves. No feeling, but that of the deepest humility, becomes such beings when they approach the throne of the Almighty.

If we are really *humble* servants of God, our humility will show itself by an entire resignation to his dispensations; considering them, even if they be afflictive, as sent in *mercy*: and intended for our final good. Leave we the choice of events to *Him*. *We* can certainly *fancy*, that such and such good things would contribute to our happiness; but *he* alone *knoweth* what earthly blessings may be safely granted. Those only are really expedient for us, which further us in the way of holiness, that his grace be not hindered<sup>1</sup>. His love for man as much

<sup>1</sup> See the Collect and its Comment for the eighth Sunday after Trinity.



exceeds man's love for himself, as eternity exceeds time. *He* loveth the *soul*—and the soul constitutes the *man*. *That* it is, which thinks and acts here, and will never cease to act and think for ever. To *his* love we may safely entrust the care both of our soul and body. *He* can render even the waters of Marah sweet and healthful<sup>1</sup>. What though the cup which our Father giveth be a cup of bitterness, and cannot pass from us—shall we not drink it? *He* can do *more* than *sweeten* it; he can enable us to drink its bitterness to the very dregs without a murmur. “Whom the lord loveth he chasteneth;” therefore “*Not my* will, but *thine*, O God! be “done.”

With respect indeed to the apparent silence of God in answer to prayer, we must not at once conclude that he is deaf to our entreaties. The result of our own experience must, to most of us, be sufficiently convincing, that oftentimes when we have been *impatient* either under troubles which we wished removed, or in expectation of some good which we coveted—the Lord was ordering all things, gradually yet surely, even for our temporal welfare, better than we could have ordered them for ourselves. But, perhaps we have *not* “asked such things as “please him.” If we have been content to ask worldly blessings only, who can wonder, that in such a case we have not found an answer of peace? for not only are worldly advantages unsatisfying, and as fast as one good is gained, do we find something still left to wish for; but they are too often

<sup>1</sup> Exod. xv. 23—26.

snare to the soul, and work *not* its *salvation*, but its *ruin*. Again—"God is a God that hideth himself" sometimes<sup>1</sup>. He leaveth even the spiritual supplicant to struggle long with the natural weakness of his heart, and the disquiet attendant upon an unceasing spiritual conflict. And this he does, not in anger, but to try us, and prove us—whether we will be constant in prayer, and strong in faith; and continue—throughout all the wearying dangers of our warfare—"Christ's faithful soldiers unto our life's end"<sup>2</sup>.

Strive we then by the help of our merciful Lord, to ask as humble servants, "such things as shall please him." If our prayers seem to be *not* answered, and we obtain *not* our petitions, when and as we expected, be it our consolation, that God chooses his own time, not ours: and he knoweth best what is for our real good. The answer, if for our harm, is refused—if for our good, only delayed. "God is not slack, as some men count slackness"<sup>3</sup>. He only waits, till we be better prepared to make a right use of what he may intend to grant. If, however, earthly blessings be all removed—if friends forsake us, and enemies abound; if competence be denied, and poverty press hard upon us; if our fair fame be overclouded, and unmerited disgrace hang over us—Honour, though not before men, yet remains; riches compared to which the wealth of the world were poverty, are yet in store; a Friend is left to us, whose favour is better than life; who himself

<sup>1</sup> Isaiah xlv. 15.

<sup>2</sup> See the Prayer in the Baptismal Service, on receiving the infant into the Church of Christ.

<sup>3</sup> 2 Pet. iii. 9.

“ordereth all things both in heaven and earth”—even our Father who is in heaven. Nay, should even *spiritual* sorrows abound—should *spiritual* consolation for a time be withheld—still—the Lord to whom we pray, is not far from every one of us. He *will* in his own good time, hear and answer the prayers of the faithful. Here the cloud is permitted to obscure the light of his countenance only for a while, that its brightness may burst upon us with more conspicuous splendour: whilst in the darkest hour of spiritual affliction, there is always the light of his promise; “*as thy days, so shall thy strength be*”<sup>1</sup>. He permits us to be in trouble temporal and

<sup>1</sup> Deut. xxxiii. 25. Few promises are more efficacious to strengthen the Christian than *this*. Whether he be poor, or sick, or afflicted, or desponding, he looks to *this* as the ground, whereon patience must rest her hope to accomplish her perfect work. It not only supports him under every variety of present trial; it does *more*. It strengthens him against the *future*. It calms even those agitating fears, which will sometimes disturb the strongest minds, in the anticipation of the pains of death. Nature indeed, lends but feeble aid in sustaining us under such fears. Whereas faith in this gracious promise—how have I seen it stay the soul amidst all the natural fears, with which death comes armed! How have I seen it fulfilled, to the vanquishing these fears, in proof that He who gave the promise, was at hand to fulfil it—a very *present* help in trouble; a fortress; a deliverer; the Redeemer, who by his own death, had for us drawn the sting from death; and from the grave had plucked its victory!

Death may indeed come with quiet step—and with so gentle hand remove the spirit from its earthly tenement, that in the tender language of Scripture, the dead may be said to “fall asleep.” But it may happen, that his advance is with violence and terror. Suppose it be—suppose the mortal struggle to be hard and long—let me never for a moment doubt, but that strength will be given, apportioned to the need. The word of truth is passed—“*as thy day; so shall be thy strength.*”

spiritual, as if to *compel* us to seek *Him*, who is an *everlasting* friend. “Call upon *me* in the day of *trouble*; *I will* deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify *me* <sup>1</sup>.”

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## 53. ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

*O GOD, who declarest thy Almighty power most chiefly in shewing mercy and pity; mercifully grant unto us such a measure of thy grace, that we running the way of thy commandments, may obtain thy gracious promises, and be made partakers of thy heavenly treasure, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

“WHO can worthily magnify thy name, O God!  
 “or shew forth all thy praise; for in the greatness  
 “of thy Almighty power thou dost delight to exer-  
 “cise it, *not* in executing *vengeance*, but *most chiefly*  
 “in shewing *mercy and pity*?”

Such is the grateful acknowledgement of a penitent, who has found, by the aid of divine grace, power to burst the chain of his sins, and walk again in the liberty, wherewith Christ hath made him free. He remembers the hour, when first conscious of his sinfulness, borne down by the load of his guilt, and terrified by the prospect of its consequences—“his soul had well nigh fainted <sup>2</sup>.” Then was heard a

<sup>1</sup> Psalm l. 15.<sup>2</sup> Ibid. xxvii. 13.

voice of peace, “Come unto me and I will give you “rest<sup>1</sup>.” The voice was heard—yet perhaps he doubted if such a call were meant for *him*. “Will “God,” he asked, “in very deed dwell *with*, and “dwell in, a heart like *mine*<sup>2</sup>?”

Reader! if hitherto thou hast lived without God in the world, it may happen, that by some striking event of his providence—by poverty, sickness, sorrow, or other calamity—thou mayest be driven to seek *Him*, as the only Being who can bring thy soul out of trouble. Shouldest thou in such an hour, experience the fears and doubts of a convinced conscience, be not discouraged! Thou hast sinned; Christ “also hath died, and become the propitiation “for thy sin<sup>3</sup>.” Call to mind the comforting truth, by which our collect would encourage the penitent to approach the throne of grace: God “*declareth “his Almighty power most chiefly in shewing mercy “and pity.*” What stronger encouragement to repentance can we look for? God, being Almighty, is *able* to forgive; and he is not only able, but ready, and *desirous* to forgive. “I have no pleasure in the “death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God: “wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye<sup>4</sup>.” He delighteth to exercise his unbounded power in shewing mercy, and pity. How animating, how comforting to the afflicted heart of the contrite, that if he turn from his sin, he is at once a fit object for the exercise of the mercy and pity of *Omnipotence*! In this his character of the infinitely merciful and pitiful,

<sup>1</sup> Matth. xi. 28.

<sup>2</sup> John xvii. 21—23.

<sup>3</sup> 1 John ii. 2.

<sup>4</sup> Ezek. xviii. 32.



Jehovah encourages even the *most* wicked to turn from their wickedness, and by a *new* course, to save their souls alive. "Thus saith the Lord: Though "your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as "snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall "be as wool<sup>1</sup>." Infinite mercy finds its proper exercise in pardoning every penitent, however deep the stain of his sins: infinite pity delights in soothing the spirits of the contrite ones, however deep the shame that overwhelms them.

Thus the wounds of conscience, like "the wounds "of a friend, are faithful<sup>2</sup>." The sinner, though stricken, is healed by the smart. His deep sense of shame, his acute feelings of remorse, his consciousness of having deserved nothing short of divine wrath—mingled as these feelings are with gratitude to God, who hath declared his omnipotence by mercifully pardoning him—*These* all combine, as a "medicine to heal his sickness." Renewed in strength, he enters upon a *new* course of action; following after *Thee*, O God, and "*running the way "of thy commandments.*" He sees at length the danger of his former course. He is now like a man, roused from heavy slumber, who finds that he has been sleeping on the edge of a precipice. He shudders even at the recollection of the danger from which he has escaped. He hastens back into the path of safety, blessing the Great Being, who powerful to punish, is equally powerful and more willing to save *every* penitent; and who hath *most mercifully* exercised that power and will, in saving *him*.

<sup>1</sup> Isaiah i. 18.

<sup>2</sup> Prov. xxvii. 6.

Hence the blessedness of repentance ! Hence on the prodigal's return, the signs of rejoicing ! Sorrow was turned into joy : the offender was met with peace, the wanderer with love, the penitent with honour. " But the father said to his servants, bring forth the best robe, and put it on him ; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet : and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it ; and let us eat and be merry : for this my son was dead, and is alive again ; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry <sup>1</sup>."

Wherefore it is not only because God " delighteth in mercy," and therefore " pardoneth iniquity," that our sorrow is turned into joy ; we have further cause of rejoicing. At the end of a holy course, are the promises of great reward : such as eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath entered into the heart of man to conceive <sup>2</sup>. The hope of gaining these, animates us to persevere amid all the difficulties of our course. " Grant unto us" therefore, O God, " such a measure of thy grace, that we, running the way"—*not* of our own will ; *not* of our former course ; but the way,—"*of thy commandments*" may *here* find the way of holiness to be the way of peace ; and *hereafter* " may obtain thy gracious promises, and be made partakers of thy heavenly treasure : through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

<sup>1</sup> Luke xv. 22—24. See the Note upon repentance in the comment upon the Collect for St. Peter's day.

<sup>2</sup> See the comment upon the Collect for the sixth Sunday after Trinity.

## 54. TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

*ALMIGHTY and everlasting God, who art always more ready to hear than we to pray, and art wont to give more than either we desire or deserve; pour down upon us the abundance of thy mercy: forgiving us those things whereof our conscience is afraid, and giving us those good things which we are not worthy to ask, but through the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ, thy Son our Lord. Amen.*

NOTHING is more consoling to the mind of a penitent, than the new view which he has of the character of God, as a God who heareth and answereth prayer. Nor can he find terms wherein to give more beautiful expression to the new and comforting feeling of which he is conscious, than the language of the Collect. He gladly confesses, that if God were not "more ready to hear, than we to pray; and wont to give more than either we desire or deserve," *he* had not been heard, and answered, when first in the anguish of remorse, he breathed the prayer of the publican—"Lord, be merciful to me a sinner."

If such be our conviction—surely we cannot more condemn our own backwardness to offer up our prayers to the Almighty, than adore *his* readiness to receive them. *He*, as Lord of all things, not only wants nothing, but is the rich fountain, whence

alone flows every and any good : yet *he* is ready to hear. *We* the creatures of his hand have nothing which is not derived from Him, and dependent upon Him for even the very air we breathe, and the power to breathe it—*We* are backward to pray.

How inverted is this order ! The Giver, ready ; the Receiver, backward ! But our Collect well points to the reason of this apparent inconsistency. God is not only ready to hear, but, having heard, is wont to give *more than either we desire or deserve*. He is wont to give “the Holy Spirit to them that ask him<sup>1</sup>.” But, is *that* the gift which we *desire* ? Is not *that* much *more* than we desire ? How true is it, that we are rather satisfied with lower gifts—*worldly* riches, power, or ease ; gifts which are of no longer duration than the uncertain span of human life—that we regard not “the exceeding riches of “grace<sup>2</sup> ;” the power of godliness ; the comfort of the Spirit—Gifts, whose end is life eternal. As for our deserts—that the Almighty spares us day by day, to repent of our sins, negligences, and ignorances ; that he is *long suffering*, in order to afford us opportunity for turning from our evil ways and doing that which is lawful and right ; that he is *afflictive*, in order to bring us to ourselves<sup>3</sup>, and so

<sup>1</sup> Luke xi. 13.

<sup>2</sup> Ephes. ii. 7.

<sup>3</sup> The parable of the prodigal son, highly affecting and interesting as it is throughout, is peculiarly touching in that part of it, in which he is represented to us, as brought to self-knowledge by the severity of adversity. “When he came to himself, he said”—“I will arise “and go to my Father ;” Luke xv. 17, 18. That “*coming to himself*”—the return from the vapouring and delusive dream of sin, to the realities of an awakened judgment—the change from a bewildered mind, to the conviction of affections misplaced, and aversions mis-

induce us to adopt this change ; that he has given his Son to die for us, and his Spirit to sanctify us ; that he has given us the promise of eternal happiness, as a merciful and sufficient motive to holy obedience—All these are as far above our deserts, as the highest heaven is above the earth wherein we dwell

directed—all picture to us the depth of that degradation to which a course of irreligion sinks the soul ; darkening the understanding, perverting the feelings, and so palsyng the powers of spiritual life, that the sinner, even whilst he saith “ I have need of nothing,” “ knoweth not that” in reality “ he is wretched and miserable, and “ poor and blind and naked.” Rev. iii. 17. He is like one dead—“ dead in trespasses and sin.”

Now as every irreligious man is like the prodigal in his prosperity—“ *beside himself*,” as it were : so every penitent, is like the prodigal in his adversity—“ *coming to himself*.” He returns to a clear and sound view of his real state. Hence the blessed use of adversity ! You must acknowledge that in the season of sorrow, and the hour of joy, you have yourself entertained very different views of the same objects, the same pursuits, the same desires, and the same aversions. The honest language of your heart when subdued by sorrow, is, “ Before I was in trouble, I went wrong, but now, O God, have I “ known thy ways.” Such is the purifying effect of trouble, cleansing the soul from the dross of worldliness, that “ I have *chosen thee*,” saith God to his people “ in the *furnace of affliction*.” Isaiah xlviii. 10.

He then is the happiest man, who forsaking *not* his father’s house, lives from youth to age in a humble and holy obedience ; but he is also happy, who having in evil hour forsaken it, and forgotten both his duty, and his interest, is brought by affliction to sober thought and calm reflection—who after wandering in all the madness of sensuality, pride, self-will, or worldliness, *comes at length to himself* ; returns to his father’s house ; and rejoices as a son to do his father’s will.

If thou, who readest these pages, art a wanderer from thy heavenly Father, pray, that thou mayest *come to thyself, now*—when there is opportunity to return. Beware, lest this awakening to consciousness be delayed, till thou shalt find thyself in the world of Spirits. Remorse alone, *not* penitence, can *then* accompany thy consciousness ; and there will be return to peace *no more* for ever.



We deserve only his wrath<sup>1</sup>: He crowneth us with his mercies<sup>2</sup>. Not only then may we with David declare the pre-eminence of Jehovah—"Who is so *great* a God, as our God<sup>3</sup>?" but we may also gratefully ask—Who so merciful? Who like him "more ready to hear, than the needy to pray?" and who like him, "wont to give more than either the suppliant desires, or the offender deserves?"

Impressed with this sense of "the multitude of his loving kindnesses<sup>4</sup>," we unhesitatingly beseech him to "pour down upon us the abundance of his mercy;" and even this large bounty is only commensurate with the vastness of its object—"to forgive us those things whereof our conscience is afraid, and to give us those good things, which we are not *worthy* to ask, but through the merits, and mediation of Jesus Christ."

Of *what* things is our conscience afraid? Reader! is there not some secret sin, which as often as thou hast yielded to it, hath made thee to loathe thyself—to despise thine own weakness; to condemn alike thy folly, and thy wickedness; shrink ashamed of thy littleness, thy cowardice, thy faithlessness, as a soldier of the cross? "O that I could be as in the days of old, when, though always unworthy, I yet strove against presumptuous and wilful sin." Is

<sup>1</sup> Lam. iii. 22. "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed."

<sup>2</sup> Psalm ciii. 10. "He hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities."

Psalm ciii. 4. "Who crowneth thee with loving kindness, and tender mercies."

<sup>3</sup> Psalm lxxvii. 13.

<sup>4</sup> Isaiah lxiii. 7.

it *then*, that thy *conscience is afraid*?—’Tis well ! be afraid—be terrified—and pray, that “the terror “ of the Lord,” thus directed against thee by thy conscience, may persuade thee to turn away from thy wickedness which thou hast committed, do that which is lawful and right, and save thy soul alive. If thou sincerely mourn the *sin*, which *causes* this remorse,—hating and *forsaking* it—*He* will then forgive *all* thy sin ! He will then heal *all* thine infirmities. He will admit thee again to the throne of grace, as one, who, though of himself *unworthy* to ask any good thing, is yet considered worthy to ask all good things—pardon and reconciliation ; peace here, and hope of happiness hereafter—through the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ our Lord.



## 55. THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

*ALMIGHTY and merciful God, of whose only gift it cometh, that thy faithful people do unto thee true and laudable service ; grant, we beseech thee, that we may so faithfully serve thee in this life, that we fail not finally to attain thy heavenly promises, through the merits of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

THE service of God constitutes the happiness of heaven<sup>1</sup> ; and a soul, averse from such service upon

<sup>1</sup> Rev. iv. 8. and vii. 15. “ Therefore are they before the throne “ of God, and serve him *day* and *night* in his temple.” Refer to p. 73.

earth, would not be happy if admitted even into the heaven of heavens. When, therefore, we look forward to heaven as our state of final happiness, we must exercise ourselves here in the “*true and laudable* service,” which prepares us for the enjoyment of such happiness hereafter.

Whilst, however, we are convinced of the necessity of serving God truly and acceptably, we cannot but be convinced also of our own insufficiency for a service so arduous. The Collect well points out to us, that our sufficiency is of God: for of *His* only gift it cometh, that even his “*faithful* people do “unto him true and laudable service.” The gift here spoken of, is the gift of the Holy Spirit: and as that is promised to every Christian who earnestly desires to possess it, and would willingly follow its guidance<sup>1</sup>, we may *all* do unto God the service required; though the strength thereto necessary, be as entirely His most gracious gift, through Jesus Christ our Lord, as our bodily strength is the gift of the same Almighty Creator.

The Christian’s first care is, that his service be *true*. To this end, he takes heed to work the work appointed him, “not with eye service, as men pleasers, but to the Lord<sup>2</sup>:” “who searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts<sup>3</sup>.” Considering the God, whose servant he is, as a Being, “to whom all hearts be open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid<sup>4</sup>,” he “serves him with a *perfect* heart

<sup>1</sup> Luke xi. 9.

<sup>2</sup> Eph. vi. 6, 7.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Chron. xxviii. 9.

<sup>4</sup> Collect at the opening of the Communion Service.

“and a *willing* mind.” He does not divide his affections between God and the world; but even whilst engaged in the necessary duties of his worldly calling, his *heart* is with *God*; to whom his *willing* mind renders willing service. Indeed this *willingness*, whilst it omits not the most trivial act of duty, gives an energy to our faculties, which renders the most arduous service comparatively easy. Whereas, an *unwilling* performance of duties, is scarcely better than a solemn mockery. What can be more inconsistent with the gratitude we owe to “the Author “and Giver of all good things<sup>1</sup>,” than an irksome round of merely formal offices? Few minds are so unprincipled, and still fewer so uninformed, but that they know themselves bound to serve, in all fidelity, their Creator and Preserver. How unwise then not to engage *heartily* in a service, which we cannot altogether avoid; and which is either mercifully accepted or indignantly rejected<sup>2</sup>, as we render it willingly, or perform it reluctantly. We should remember, that an *unwilling* service makes us equally responsible with the most zealous service, whilst it falls short both of the grace and the benefit of it.

*True* service leads to *laudable* service. No presumption dictates this marked term. Praise is not expected as the reward of merit, but gratefully received, as a free gift of God’s grace. Of ourselves we are equally unable and unworthy even to escape everlasting punishment; much less can we justly claim reward. Hence, when our heavenly Father

<sup>1</sup> See the Comment on the seventh Sunday after Trinity.

<sup>2</sup> Rev. iii. 16.

would encourage us in a holy course, by a “well done, good and faithful servant,” the praise, though addressed to *us*, returns to *Him*, whose worthiness, and whose righteousness are imputed to us; even Jesus Christ the righteous. Nevertheless, verily there is a reward for the righteous, and praise for the true-hearted: and the hope of this praise, even though bestowed for another’s sake, is yet sufficiently animating to our *endeavours* after a true and laudable service; God being pleased to make—*not* our merit, or demerit—but our slothfulness, or diligence in a holy course, the measure whereby he regulates his anger, or his praise; his denial or his bounty <sup>1</sup>.

As the *praise* of true service, so the *power* to perform it, is declared by our Collect to come only of the *gift* of *God*. Suppose we could say with St. Paul, that, as servants of the most high, we had “laboured more abundantly than they all;” we must be content to add the Apostle’s confession, “yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me <sup>2</sup>.” Thus accompanied—thus aided—we may hope, both to render that service, “whose praise is not of men,

<sup>1</sup> See the parable of the Talents, Matt. xxv. 14—30. “He also that had received two talents, came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them.”

“His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.”

We are thus encouraged; Matt. xiii. 12. “For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath.”

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 10.



“but of God<sup>1</sup>,” and also to reap the reward of it. Not that we expect our recompence in this short, and bewildering course of human life. The world, and all it can boast, giveth not the supporting hope, which satisfieth an immortal soul. *Heavenly* promises only can do *that*; and *they* must be waited for. We must “in patience possess our souls.” The Rest, which is to reward the faithful servant—that “Rest, which remaineth for the people of God”—we shall not enjoy, till every shifting scene of mortality be passed away. In the divine promise, there is also mention made of “a crown of righteousness,” but *that* is not present—It “is laid up<sup>2</sup>” for *future* reward; to be given, when the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall open the kingdom of heaven to all believers: when also they, who find true and laudable service here to be perfect freedom, will there find it to be fulness of joy. With what delight will they renew their service in heaven, with the spirits of the just made perfect; with angels—ten thousand times ten thousand—and with all the heavenly host; resting not day and night, but praising thee, O God! and giving glory, and honour, and thanksgiving to Thee for evermore: Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Amen!

<sup>1</sup> Rom. ii. 29.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Tim. iv. 8.

## 56. FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

*ALMIGHTY and everlasting God, give unto us the increase of faith, hope, and charity: and that we may obtain that which thou dost promise, make us to love that which thou dost command, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

THE stronger our *Faith*—the more animated our *Hope*—the more enlarged our *Charity*—the more readily shall we pour out the heart unto God, and, in the comprehensive language of the Collect, pray for an *increase* of them. This desire after increase of spiritual grace and power arises from the spiritual nature of the soul; which is never satisfied with its present attainment, but, in every faithful servant of the Almighty, is, and will be throughout all eternity, in a state of continual progress towards perfection<sup>1</sup>.

These Christian virtues are here placed in the order observed by St. Paul; *Charity* being last mentioned, as being the greatest<sup>2</sup>.

*First* then, of *Faith*. When we pray for an increase of faith, we pray not only to have a stronger belief in the truths of Christianity, but to have daily a more awakening, and abiding conviction of the blessings, and duties conveyed to us in those truths. We pray for an *increase* of such a *faith*, that knowing the *terrors* of the Lord, we may, more

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xiii. 12.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. xiii. 13.

and more, abhor and shun sin; and animated by his *promises*, may either more zealously persevere in a holy and religious course of life; or, as penitents under a deep sense of sin and unworthiness, be more unfeignedly desirous to return to a reconciled God and Father in Christ Jesus. It is the weakness of this faith which causes us less readily to practise the duties of the gospel, than to believe its doctrines. We have little difficulty perhaps in declaring, "Lord, I believe;" yet, when we find ourselves placed in trying circumstances, which requires us to put our faith into practice—then we are compelled to cry out, "Lord, help thou mine unbelief." Now this is, in fact, to adopt the sentiment of our Collect. We lament the *insufficiency* of our faith, and pray for an *increase* of it.

But St. Paul justly observes, that "if in *this* life *only* we have hope in Christ, we are of all men *most miserable*<sup>1</sup>." Our *faith* would suffer *shipwreck* amid the waves of this troublesome world, if *hope of heaven* were not as an "anchor sure and *stedfast*<sup>2</sup>." The severe self-discipline, which stoicism exacted without proposing any after-reward, was grounded upon a principle which by fostering pride, tended rather to harden the heart, than to meliorate it—and at best to leave it to comfortless self-applause in those seasons of distress and sorrow, which come alike to all; and to cheer which the best philosophy of the ancients was altogether inadequate. Whereas religion, whilst it offers no exemption from the various *ills* of life, and exacts a

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 19.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. vi. 19.

severe self-discipline, with an absolute submission to the divine will, supplies adequate motive for the exercise of resignation, in permitting and encouraging us to look forward to its reward hereafter. Again, how are we to obey St. James' injunction to "count it all joy, when we fall into divers temptations<sup>1</sup>;" except by looking forward to that change, when temptations, and trials of our faith shall have an end; and when there shall be neither sin nor sorrow more<sup>2</sup>? This was the reasoning of St. Paul, in his memorable word of consolation to the afflicted brethren at Corinth: "Our light affliction which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory: while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen, are temporal; but the things which are not seen, are

<sup>1</sup> James i. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Even a Heathen—as if catching the first twilight of that glorious morning, then about to rise over a benighted world in the advent of the Sun of Righteousness—argues in favour of a cheerful expectation of death, upon the ground of that happy change which it brings to good men: a change from a life of distracting care to a state of undisturbed tranquillity. "But if," says Cicero, "what with regret at the past, and anticipation of the future, life be a scene marked with indecision in laying our plans, and tormenting anxiety in the prosecution of them; O! the welcome journey—the journey of death—which when it be finished, will leave us without care, without anxiety, for ever." *Cic. Tusc. quæst. Lib. I.*

If a Heathen could thus hopefully look forward to the close of his mortal course, with what brighter hope may not the Christian await death; cheered as he is by the full light of the Sun of righteousness, who hath brought to light life and immortality; and is himself risen to happiness and glory, the first fruits of them who sleep!

“eternal<sup>3</sup>.” *Hope* then it is, which like a star in the firmament, shines the brighter, as the shades of sorrow darken. A new view opens to us. We live in the prospect of another, and a happier world, where is just and final judgment; where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest; where our struggles with sin will close, and holiness will be at once our service and our joy; where all our afflictions will be over; where our happiness will begin, and know no end for ever. When the faithful Christian realises to himself the prospect of this happy change, how light appear the heaviest sorrows, which this world can lay upon him! “They are grievous”—he may say—“but they cannot last long. After death, they cease; and eternity, a *glorious* eternity *begins*. Of what ills do I complain? Suffer what I may, my sufferings are but for a moment, compared to a blissful eternity. Let me then continue to rejoice in this *Hope*, and pray for an *increase* of it.”

He prays also for an increase of Charity; which is declared by St. Paul to be the greatest of the three. Nor without reason is this pre-eminence assigned to it. For the meaning of the term is not confined merely to liberality towards the sick and needy; but comprehends perfect love towards both God and man, and partakes, in its character, of the divine perfections, which *never fail*. When time shall be no longer, and the kingdom of heaven be open to all believers, *Faith*, and *Hope*, will *cease*. *Faith* will be lost in certainty, and hope in enjoy-

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. iv. 17, 18.



ment. But *Charity* will survive the wreck of worlds, outlive time itself, and be for ever the work of the servants of God<sup>1</sup>.

We therefore, with great propriety pray for an *increase of Faith*, which will not fail us—of *Hope*, which will not deceive us—and of *Charity*, which will continue with us for ever; that supported by faith, under every trial; comforted by hope under every affliction; and influenced by charity to live in perfect love both with God and man, our conversation even here may be in heaven; and our whole life be so pure and holy, just and good, that “loving  
“that which God doth command, we may obtain  
“that which he doth promise; through Jesus Christ  
“our Lord.”



## 57. FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

*KEEP, we beseech thee, O Lord, thy Church with thy perpetual mercy. And because the frailty of man without thee cannot but fall, keep us ever by thy help from all things hurtful, and lead us to all things profitable for our salvation, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

WHENEVER we offer up a prayer for the *Church*, we may be considered as appealing to the honour and majesty of God, that for his own sake he would keep us in safety. The Church is founded upon *his*

<sup>1</sup> Refer to the comment upon Quinquagesima Sunday.

authority, sanctified by *his* spirit, called by *his* name; and is the outward means whereby on earth his worship is preserved, his glory acknowledged, and his name held in honour. Hence the Apostle's earnest exhortation, "not to forsake the assembling "ourselves together<sup>1</sup>;" lest we lose the favour with which the Lord blesseth the congregation. An habitual neglect, or even a temporary disregard of those observances, which mark a congregation of Christians, gradually weakens our regard for *Him*, who is the proper object of all worship; and renders us either unfaithful or lukewarm. We therefore pray that He, whom we worship, would bless the assembled multitudes which constitute his Church; and grant, that as with one accord they make their common supplications unto him, their strength and safety may be secured, for his honour and his glory's sake.

Not that we can for a moment doubt the care of God for his Church, or his knowledge of its necessities before we ask; but prayer is the appointed mode of expressing our entire dependence upon him, to protect both the whole body of the Church, and each individual member of the same<sup>2</sup>. What, if the Church of Christ be, like "a strong tower of "defence," founded upon a rock; surely we must be aware, that the superstructure can no otherwise stand secure, than as it is supported by the continued presence of *his* power, who laid its foundations. "*Perpetual mercy*" is required, because *perpetual danger* threatens. Our liturgy well teaches us to consider "the *whole* state of Christ's Church"

<sup>1</sup> Heb. x. 25.

<sup>2</sup> Refer to page 255.

as being “*militant* here on earth<sup>1</sup>”—engaged in a perpetual warfare, with the devil and his angels, and the wicked men who work his will. We learn moreover from the page of history, that she hath from age to age, maintained a succession of struggles against the enemies of her peace.

But outward foes assail the Church in vain, if all be faithful within. Hence our collect leads us to consider the frailty of each individual as the danger most to be dreaded, and accordingly directs us to pray against it, lest it bring us to nought. Indeed the petition is a most comprehensive one, which under all circumstances we shall do well to offer—particularly when we call to mind our character as members of Christ. Who, except the Lord, can “keep us ever by his help from all things hurtful, “and lead us to all things profitable to our salvation?” Nor can we take too much heed, lest any harm, or dishonour accrue to the Church, through our individual frailty. Exact recompence to each *individual* is reserved for *future* judgment: but *nations* and *Churches* often experience in *this* world either the wrath or the favour of God, as they either honour or dishonour him. Thus saith the Lord, “Them that honour me I will honour, and *they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed*<sup>2</sup>.” This declaration has been strikingly fulfilled, in the fate of the seven Churches of Asia. For where is now the honour of those Churches? It is, as though it had never been. All which they boasted as glorious in

<sup>1</sup> See the prayer in the communion service, for “the whole state of Christ’s Church militant here on earth.”

<sup>2</sup> 1 Sam. ii. 30.

fame and great in power—brought low, even to the dust! Their palaces, in ruins—their temples, desolate. The scattered fragments of greatness do but shew from what a height pride is fallen! The robber now finds a lurking place, and the wild beast of the desert his lair, where once the hymn of praise was raised to Jehovah, and the families of Christ did dwell in honour and in peace. But whilst we mourn their fall, and reflect, with amazement and awe, how low the mighty lie; take we heed to *ourselves*! They fell because of unbelief—*practical* unbelief—wickedness; worldliness; lukewarmness. *We* stand—if we stand at all—by faith; by a living, a *practical* faith—shewing itself alive unto God by a holy life—engaged in every good word and work; not slothful in the business of Christian duty, but fervent in spirit; serving *Him*, who will require, that we be found either labouring, or watching; and will recompense to every man according as his work shall be.

If however it happen at any time, that owing to the frailty of our mortal nature, we fall during our struggle with the spiritual “adversary, the devil,” and yield to sin, bringing disgrace upon the Church, and hazard to our souls—let a consciousness of our offence, lead us to contrition; let contrition lead us to prayer; and let our prayer be, that Almighty God would “give us true repentance; would forgive us all our sins, negligences, and ignorances; and endue us with the grace of his holy spirit, to amend our lives according to his holy word.”

So may we hope the Church will flourish in perpetual safety, and the members of the same be

“ kept from all things hurtful, and led to all things  
 “ profitable to their salvation; through Jesus Christ  
 “ our Lord.”



## 58. SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

*O LORD, we beseech thee, let thy continual pity cleanse and defend thy Church: and because it cannot continue in safety without thy succour, preserve it evermore by thy help and goodness, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

WE have already observed, that if the Church is to stand in its *strength*, superior to the attacks of its enemies, the *individuals* who compose it, must stand firm. As *they* are strong or weak in faith, steady or wavering in obedience, so will the body, of which they are members, flourish or decay. In like manner, the *purity* of the *Church*, depends upon the purity of the *Individuals* who compose it. When therefore we pray, that God would in pity “ cleanse and defend his Church,” we do virtually pray for *individual* strength, and purity; that so defended, we may be strong to work out our own salvation; and so cleansed, may be ourselves, bright “ examples not in faith only, but in purity<sup>1</sup>.”

<sup>1</sup> 1 Tim. iv. 12.



But who is sufficient for these things? Our sufficiency is of God. Do we then desire to “worship him in spirit and in truth?” let our first service, be the service of prayer; that *he* may strengthen our good resolutions, and bring the same to good effect. For so closely does their sinful nature cling to fallen men, even to those “called the sons of God<sup>1</sup>,” that to act with perfect singleness and purity of heart in our religious and social duties is indeed proof of a successful resistance against evil, and an advanced growth in holiness, which cometh only of the gift of God through Jesus Christ<sup>2</sup>. This gift—the gift of the Holy Ghost—*this* alone can remove “envy, hatred, malice, and all uncharitable-ness” towards our fellow creatures. *This* alone can root out pride towards our God.

If however we be thus assisted, we feel the burden of our cross to be light: we “learn of him,” who meekly shares the load; and who has already removed its greatest weight, by himself having borne our sins<sup>3</sup>. In short, to the pure in heart, the love of Christ hath absorbed the love of self; and the fear

<sup>1</sup> 1 John iii. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. vii. 24. Here St. Paul, with his usual force of language, directs us to the grace of God through Jesus Christ as the only means of deliverance, in our unceasing struggle between holiness and sin. “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Now the same God is both able and willing to deliver from the body of this death, not St. Paul only; but all, who, under a deep feeling of their own infirmity, flee unto Jesus Christ, as their only mediator and redeemer.

<sup>3</sup> Isaiah liii. 12. and 1 Peter ii. 24.

of the world has been conquered by the fear of God. Whilst thus we live, our lives adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour. Then—but not till *then*—we may attain to that uprightness of intention towards man, and purity of thought towards God, for which in this collect we pray. Such indeed is the unworldliness and sincerity of heart, which characterizes the true Christian, that in him we ever find exemplified the apostolic test of a member of Christ—“If any man be in *Christ*, he is a *new* creature.”

So, with respect to the *defence*, for which we here pray. The Church of God “cannot continue in safety without his succour;” because the members of which it is composed, are frail men, dust and ashes, unable of themselves even to “think any thing, as of themselves.” Hence, our prayer for the defence of the Church, is a prayer for our own defence against those spiritual enemies, from whom the Lord alone can “preserve us evermore by his help and goodness; through Jesus Christ.” Thus whilst we feel the necessity of holiness on the part of man, as indispensable towards salvation; we believe the power to be of God. Our highest exertions are required; yet the highest cannot command success, or deserve it. We are to strain every nerve in our Christian course, running with unfailing patience the race set before us, and pressing towards the “mark for the prize of our high calling;” yet our noblest energies *cannot, of themselves*, bear us to the goal. Our strength is but weakness. That it fails not, is of *his* mercy, in whom is our high calling—*Jesus Christ*. *His* strength is made per-

fect even in our weakness—*his* is the strength—*his* the success—*his* the merit—though the prize be *ours*, through the grace of God in Him.

Whoso then offers up the prayer of this Collect with an earnest desire that it may be graciously answered, will consider that upon his *individual* holiness, and strength, depend, in part, the purity and safety of the *Church* of which he is a member. May each reader apply to himself these observations! may he walk with God, and endeavour to be a *worthy* member of the *Church* of Christ; as one, who hopes to be, at last, an inheritor of his *kingdom*!



## 59. SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

*LORD, we pray thee, that thy grace may always prevent and follow us; and make us continually to be given to all good works, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

IN the earlier ages of the world, Almighty God was pleased sometimes to make direct revelation of himself, and to hold *immediate* communication with his faithful servants. It was then at once their privilege and praise, that they “walked with God<sup>1</sup>.”

The Almighty now holds communion with his servants *mediately*, by the Spirit; to whom they are

<sup>1</sup> Gen. v. 24. and Gen. vi. 9.

directed to look, as a teacher and comforter. “*He*,” saith the Redeemer, “abideth with you *for ever* ; “ *he* shall teach you *all* things”—“the Holy Ghost, “the Comforter ;” a counsellor in every season of difficulty ; a comforter in every time of trouble<sup>1</sup>.

Anxious therefore still to walk with God, as nearly as we may, we pray that this spirit, the spirit of *grace*—may not only follow us, but *prevent*—or *go before* us. And justly does the humble soul thus pray. God alone knows what hidden dangers and difficulties may be in our path even of duty ; and none but himself can either so weaken their power over us, or apportion our strength to them, that we may overcome them<sup>2</sup>. Hence if we would walk in safety, we must unreservedly depend upon the continued aid of that *preventing* grace, whereby our heavenly Father either “leads us not into temptation,” or “delivers us from the evil” of it. It was in this spirit of unreserved dependence, that the Redeemer betook himself to close communing with God, and earnest supplication to him in the Garden of Gethsemane. No present danger ; no immediate evil threatened : no actual bodily suffering was the cause of that pain which wrung, as it were, great drops of blood from the Saviour’s brow. His danger, his peril, his pain, were in prospect. The whole scene of his future sufferings was clear to his omniscient eye. He seemed already to feel the weight of the sins of the whole world, which he was about to take upon himself ; already he seemed forsaken of his God—a spectacle to men and angels—and he was

<sup>1</sup> John xiv. 16. 26.

<sup>2</sup> See the note, page 276.

in an agony, lest in the hour of trial, his faith should fail him<sup>1</sup>. “Father, if thou be willing, remove this “cup from me : nevertheless, not my will, but thine “be done<sup>2</sup>.” Thus he prayed for *preventing* grace, that either the severity of his approaching trial might be mitigated, or himself strengthened to meet it. The prayer was answered—“there appeared an “angel from heaven, strengthening him.” The suppliant became at last the conqueror.

How much more must such a prayer be suitable to frail and erring man !

*Without* the grace of God, our best intentions are frustrated, our most wary counsels come to nought, our most settled purposes are dissipated, our most fixed resolves prove light as the breath which made them ; and, in the hour of temptation, we fall. Let the weeping Peter bear witness to these truths ! Who, amongst the Apostles, exhibited in his mas-

<sup>1</sup> The word “*agony*” is applied *strictly*, to that feeling of anxiety, which is experienced in the prospect of any great undertaking. Thus the father of poetry speaks of his heroes as feeling “the agony” of the contest, not when under the smart of pain, or amid the horrors of carnage, but *before* they engaged. Such feeling argued no timidity, or backwardness in meeting danger : it was a deep and anxious feeling of concern for the consequences which might result to others from their failure or success.

So our blessed Lord—about to enter upon his last contest with the enemy—“was in an agony” of infinitely anxious care, that he might prove successful : because upon *his* success, depended the salvation of mankind ; and he already knew how many would reject the salvation he was about to purchase—for how many his blood would be shed ; and shed in vain. “Many are called ; but few are chosen.”

Such love did the Saviour bear to fallen man !

<sup>2</sup> Luke xxii. 42, 43, 44.



ter's service so noble a bearing of himself? We cannot but honour that high feeling of disinterestedness, that utter recklessness of himself, his safety and his life, with which he opposed in his own person, an armed and furious multitude. Promptly standing between the master he loved, and the enemies gathered round him, he was ready at the risk even of life to save that master, and redeem his memorable pledge of service; "though I should die "with thee, yet will I not deny thee<sup>1</sup>." And thus far, all was well. But his resolution partook too much of self-confidence. He trusted in *his own power*. He stood in *his own strength*. Such armour could not be proof against the fiery darts of the wicked one. He had prepared himself only for trial of his courage; and the devil knew him to be *unprepared* to resist *contempt*. The attack was therefore directed against his dread of shame; and he, who braved the sword, yielded to the sharper weapon indeed—a taunting tongue<sup>2</sup>.

Warned by this fall of the Apostle, to avoid self-confidence; and encouraged by the glorious example of our blessed Lord, to seek in the trying hour of temptation the aid of *Him*, without whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy, let us go on our way, humble yet rejoicing. Dangers which we see not may be in our path; difficulties, which we foresee not, may impede our progress; but our courage is not therefore to be cast down, nor our faith weak-

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xxvi. 35.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. xxvi. 71. "This fellow was also with Jesus of Nazareth."

See the Comment on the Collect for the Wednesday before Easter, and for St. Peter's Day.

ened. ONE *goes before* us, who knoweth our necessities before we know them ourselves, and who will mercifully provide for them. He will give us grace to help in every time of need. He will himself accompany us—both *preventing* and *following* us—that so guided, so supported, we may be *continually* given to all good works<sup>1</sup>, and be found at last watching. “I” saith the Lord of life to his faithful servants—“I am with you *always*, even to “the end of the world ; Amen.”



## 60. EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

*LORD, we beseech thee, grant thy people grace to withstand the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil ; and with pure hearts and minds to follow thee, the only God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

THE enemies of our soul are here represented under *three* terms, “the *world*, the *flesh*, and the “*devil*.”

The *world*, against whose influence we pray—consists in power, pleasure, riches, the pride and vanities of life, evil companions, cruel enemies, false friends, or whatever outward objects would either entice, or drive us from serving God.

<sup>1</sup> See the comment for the nineteenth Sunday after Trinity.

The temptations of the *flesh*, are still more dangerous. These either spring from, or are cherished by our own hearts. Such are our violent passions—anger, hatred, lust, self-will, and whatever desires are contrary to the pure and perfect law of God.

The *devil*, however, is the great tempter. All other temptations would lose much of their power, if *he* did not artfully so direct them, that they too often find us unprepared. He knows the time and place most suited for their success, and “seeking” “whom he may devour,” most skilfully adapts the temptations to our weaknesses.

Nor must the most exalted Christian esteem himself secure from the attacks of such enemies. Resistance to their efforts constitutes that spiritual warfare, which begins with the first dawn of reason, and ends not, till its light be closed for ever here. In our baptismal service, the congregation are well reminded, that the new member of Christ is enrolled as a soldier, “manfully to fight under his banner” “against sin, the world, and the devil, and to continue” “Christ’s faithful soldier and servant unto his life’s” “end.” Under this figurative language, how much of instruction is couched! how much of consolation! If in a worldly warfare, the soldier, fully confident in the qualifications of his chief, shrinks not from the most arduous duty; if no labours tire, no dangers daunt him; if he rests assured that in the hour of peril he shall be supported; and if under such assurance, he fights manfully—Well may *our* faith be firm; well may our efforts be unceasing, as soldiers in a *spiritual* warfare! The great captain of our

salvation—Jesus Christ—has led the way not to battle only, but to victory. *Our* enemies now, were once *his*. *His* contest also was against the world, the flesh, and the devil. Witness his memorable struggle in the wilderness, where all were arrayed against him. Witness his victory over all <sup>1</sup>.

The EVIL ONE directed his temptations with his accustomed regard to peculiarity of circumstance and situation. Bodily suffering from long hunger seemed a fit occasion to tempt the Son of God, by suggesting an easy mode of providing bread: and that too, amid the deep seclusions of a wild and rocky wilderness. But though placed, where there was no hospitality to afford a supply, and where no usual means of procuring food were at hand, He preferred hunger with a good conscience to plenty; when the means of procuring the food required must have been exceeding sinful, as distrusting the providence of God.

In the second temptation, the Saviour was still victorious. Indeed he displayed on that occasion an union of dignity and meekness, in repelling the taunting language of his adversary, which might in itself have been sufficient to remove the doubt which the taunt conveyed. “*If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down,*” said the scornful tempter. “*Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God*” was the meek and dignified reply of Him, who though Himself equal with the Father, would not do ought,

<sup>1</sup> In the comment upon the Collect for the first Sunday in Lent, the temptations of our Lord in the wilderness are considered rather more at large.

which would seem to derogate from *his* authority and power, whose “will he came to do.”

That the third temptation also failed, we wonder not. The world, which could not allure the Saviour to tempt the Lord his God by a display of his own divine nature, would hardly entice Him to the base act of worshipping the enemy of God. The rebuke therefore, “get thee behind me, Satan,” was but the language of just and contemptuous indignation.

Having thus seen the great captain of our salvation, in all things tempted like as we are, yet without sin; would we prove ourselves his faithful soldiers? Would we too learn to conquer our lusts, and subdue our wills, and love our God, better than all which the world can give of riches, power, and glory? Let us act as he acted—Let us arm ourselves with the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; let us watch unto prayer; and beseech our heavenly Father to grant *us* also the spirit of protection, by which his own well beloved Son became victorious over his temptations. *That* spirit will then be *our* protector. Let us not doubt the promise of Him who is *Truth*. Rather, as faithful and resolute soldiers of the Cross, let us follow whither our great captain hath already so successfully led the way. He may call us to brave the extremity of trial and temptation; but as we know that “no man is tempted above that “he is able<sup>1</sup>,” we also know that we shall conquer, if we be true to ourselves, and continue in a steadfast trust, that he will be our defence; “a Sun and a “Shield,” in our hour of peril. Let us—in this

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. x. 13.



panoply of faith—"resist the devil, "and he will "flee from us<sup>1</sup>." Happy! Happy Christian! when thou art enabled, by God's grace, to resist the varied temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil; and thereby find thyself free to follow the commandments of thy God, "with a pure heart and willing "mind;" gaining that peace of mind which passeth all understanding; and living at once to thine own everlasting welfare, and the honour of thy God here, and for ever.



## 61. NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

*O GOD, forasmuch as without thee we are not able to please thee; mercifully grant, that thy Holy Spirit may in all things direct and rule our hearts, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

As the spirit of life, breathed into us by God, is the spirit of all the movements of our bodies, whereby we are known to be *living* men; so the Spirit of Grace is the spring of all those movements of the soul—in holiness of thought, word, and deed—whereby we are known as *living* members of Christ.

Therefore, as we cannot exercise the powers of our bodies, even in the most minute degree, without the continuance of the spirit of bodily life; so neither can we do *any* thing as alive unto God, and pleasing

<sup>1</sup> James iv. 7.

to Him, unless the spirit of grace continue to “direct  
“and rule our hearts, in *all* things.”

Hence the reasonable grounds on which we pray in this Collect for the *constant* presence, and *universal* agency of the Holy Spirit of God.

Of the many errors however into which, from want of due consideration, even professing Christians are apt to fall; *this* is perhaps not the least evil in its consequences, that they consider religion—or that conduct which would be consistent with the influence of the Holy Spirit—as suited to great occasions of life, but of too high a stamp for its smaller concerns. They allow it to be admirably adapted to the more solemn intercourse between the soul and its God; or even to the more important concerns between man and man; but they either feel not, or do not act as if they felt, the paramount necessity of being religious in the more minute parts of their conduct. Whereas, *God* noteth *all*.—As the God of providence, He marketh not only when stars in their courses fail, but when a sparrow falleth, or a hair of our head perisheth. And in the moral government of the world, the same divine voice which forbids to swear by heaven, or by him who dwelleth there, hath declared, that for every idle word which men speak, they shall give account thereof, in the day of judgment<sup>1</sup>.

If these reflections were duly weighed in our heart we should more readily adopt the language of our Collect, and pray Almighty God, that as to please him is our proper work, and as our own

<sup>1</sup> Matth. xii. 36.

strength is unequal to the work, he would “merci-fully grant his holy spirit, in *all* things to direct and rule our hearts, through Jesus Christ.”

We may here observe, that *he* is the most perfect Christian<sup>1</sup>, who most strictly makes a conscience of the *minute* part of his conduct, as well as the more conspicuous acts of Christian duty: and is careful to regulate by the pure spirit of the Gospel, those secret thoughts and motives, which are known to God only, as well as his conduct and conversation which are under the cognizance of human censure or applause. Indeed, attention to minute points of conduct would seem in a peculiar manner to distinguish Christian character. The careless ones can see the danger of more glaring offences; and accordingly consider the murderer, the thief, the peace-breaker, and other offenders against human laws, as justly amenable to human punishment. Keener still is the eye of faith. It sees the hatefulness and dangers of *heart-sin*<sup>2</sup>, and understandeth, that the same voice which warns the angry man, to hold his hand from murder, and the covetous to steal not, bids us all, “be content with that we have;” “love those who hate us;” and give our *hearts* to God. Therefore to obey the former commands without heed to the latter is but a half-service: can neither please Him whom we serve, nor benefit ourselves. If we would please God, there must first be a willing

<sup>1</sup> “Leaving the principles,”—“let us go on unto *perfection*.” Heb. vi. 1.—See the note, and its context, upon the comment to the collect for the second Sunday after Trinity.

<sup>2</sup> Prov. iv. 23. “Keep thy *heart* with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life.”

mind to serve him acceptably; and the Will must be furthered by his gracious aid. But as neither thought, word, nor deed can please unless it be sanctified; let us adopt in sincerity, and with a desire to be guided by the influence for which we pray—the language of this Collect; and implore the giver of all good, mercifully to grant, that his “holy spirit may *in all things* direct and rule our *hearts*, “through Jesus Christ our Lord.”



## 62. TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

*O ALMIGHTY and most merciful God, of thy bountiful goodness keep us, we beseech thee, from all things that may hurt us, that we being ready both in body and soul, may cheerfully accomplish those things that thou wouldest have done, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

IF amid the dangers of life we are kept “from all “things which may hurt us,” we are so kept by the “bountiful goodness” of an “Almighty and most “merciful God.”

This is a truth, so practically beneficial to those who act under an unreserved faith in it, that we cannot too deeply impress it upon our minds. A just feeling respecting it, is a continued support under difficulties; guarding the heart of the afflicted against unjust thoughts of God, and reconciling,

with a due sense of his love, even the heaviest visitations of his providence. The Collect addresses God, as at the same time “Almighty, and most merciful.” Is he *Almighty*? Then, all things in heaven and earth do bow before and obey him: consequently, whatever evil befall us is permitted by him. Is he *most merciful*? Then, not only are we indebted to his mercy, for preservation from what evils we escape; but we may rest assured that even the evils which happen to us, are intended, like bitter medicines for the sick, to work our final good. He who willeth not the death of a sinner, chasteneth us in infinite love: even as a Father his Son. Gratitude therefore, when enjoying a freedom from the ills of life, and resignation under the severest sufferings, are the characteristic feelings of a Christian; as either affliction calls forth the expressions of the one, or an even course of life demands from him an unreserved declaration of the other<sup>1</sup>.

Should our prayer be answered in peace, the object to which in this Collect we then pledged ourselves, is well becoming those, who are renewed by regeneration, in the image of God<sup>2</sup>. We pray of God to deliver us “from all things that may hurt us;” for the very purpose of being free to serve *Him*, and, “being ready both in body and soul, cheerfully to accomplish those things which *He* would have done; through Jesus Christ our Lord.” It should be remembered, that nothing is

<sup>1</sup> It was with this feeling of gratitude under experience of his more signal deliverances from evil, that David declared, “My soul shall make her *boast* in the Lord.” Psalm xxxiv. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Ephes. iv. 24.



really hurtful to our best interests, except what hinders us in doing the will of God; and that every thing, which does so hinder, *that* it is, against which we pray. Even temporal blessings—health, peace, and riches—if they entangle us as it were in our spiritual course, and prevent us from steadily fulfilling the will of God, are as surely hurtful to us, as if cares and sorrows and afflictions were so multiplied upon us, that we repined at the will of heaven. Suppose a rich and prosperous man, *trusting* in *riches*, and *forsaking* his God, to become proud of his prosperity: suppose also a poor man, impatient under poverty, and fancying himself hardly dealt with by the Lord of all; to exhibit the pride of a discontented heart—where, in these two proud men, is the shade of difference as to their sin in opposing the will of God<sup>1</sup>?

If however, by the merciful ordering of our heavenly Father, the more fearful ills of life, temporal or spiritual, be removed from us—if neither poverty, nor riches—neither the allurements of a high station, nor the temptations of a low estate,—be suffered to beset us; and our course be ordered in peace—*Then* are we the more strictly bound by every tie of gratitude and filial love, to devote ourselves—our souls and bodies<sup>2</sup>—a “reasonable, holy, and lively “sacrifice” unto the Lord.

This is the Christian’s proper work: this, his joy. For heart of man cannot imagine a happier state on earth, than, unshackled by sin, and unen-

<sup>1</sup> Refer to the note in page 268.

<sup>2</sup> See the Thanksgiving at the close of the Communion Service.

tangled by care, to be ever *ready*, like “good and faithful servants,” cheerfully to accomplish those things to which the Lord God—our Master and our Friend—may call us : gaining from him strength and power, with unreserved obedience unshrinkingly to do *his* Will, and with unhesitating fortitude, to resist *our own* ; through Jesus Christ our Lord.



### 63. TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

*GRANT, we beseech thee, merciful Lord, to thy faithful people pardon and peace ; that they may be cleansed from all their sins, and serve thee with a quiet mind, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

IT was the reproach of the prophets of Israel, that they “dealt falsely” in administering the mercies of God. “They have healed also the hurt of “the daughter of my people slightly ;” saith the Lord, “speaking peace where there was no peace<sup>1</sup>.”

Not so deals our venerable Church. Not so would she heal the hurt of her people. Whether she offer consolation or reproof ; the honour of God, and the

<sup>1</sup> Jer. vi. 14. This expression is used in allusion to the fatal wound of sin, which was first inflicted by the serpent upon Adam ; and the miserable consequences of which have since been alleviated only by the aid of Him, the great healer of the nations ; who forgiveth all our sins, and *healeth* all our infirmities.

salvation of souls, are the objects to which, as to one and the same point, she directs her attention. What hinders the one, she considers as detracting from the other: what tends to the furtherance of either, tends, as she well knows, to establish both. She declares on the one hand, that Jesus Christ has made “a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world.” On the other hand she directs her people to confess, “the remembrance of their sins to be grievous unto them; the burden of them intolerable.”<sup>1</sup>—Whilst the *false* prophets would lull the restless conscience with the assurance of “peace, where there is no peace;” *She* proclaims—“no peace without pardon; no pardon without repentance.”

Such also is the spirit of the prayer which in this Collect she teaches us to offer. We pray *first* for *pardon*, then for *peace*. And the truly spiritual character of the blessing we ask for, is clearly signified by the end proposed to ourselves in asking—“that we may be cleansed from all our sins, and serve the Lord with a quiet mind, through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Reader! how truly is here pictured your weakness and your misery, during a continuance in a course of wilful sin. When you are conscious of your sin, yet unwilling to part from it—when you know that the evil in which you walk, leadeth to everlasting misery; and yet have not courage to trace back your way into the path of holiness—when you have neither

<sup>1</sup> See the prayer of consecration, and the general confession in the Communion service.

health for the innocent enjoyments of life, nor strength to bear up under its sorrows—when every pleasure palls, and every care oppresses—when you fear, where no fear is; and hope, where is only disappointment—when so powerful is the effect of sin upon the soul, that in the language of holy writ, “the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint<sup>1</sup>”—so circumstanced, how can you serve God, with a *quiet* mind? Serve him you may, with eye-service; but not with self-satisfaction, or benefit. You may worship him outwardly; but a sickly character will pervade all you do: there will be “no health” in you<sup>2</sup>. You will be of the number of those who are dead even while they live<sup>3</sup>; unequal to the fulfilment of your duties alike before God and man.

How different he, who is “cleansed from all his “sins” by faith in the purifying blood of the Lamb of God. The overpowering misery of his sin being removed from him, he rejoiceth in his recovered spiritual health; and in the fervour of a heart-felt gratitude, proffers a heart-felt acknowledgment<sup>4</sup>. He feels relieved from an intolerable load. He is happier than he knows. Like the man lame from his birth, and endued by miracle with powers yet new to him, his heart dances for joy: he cannot refrain from exercising his new powers—“walking “and leaping, and praising God<sup>5</sup>.”

Indeed, if there be happiness on this side the grave, it is surely found, when—with a heart unburthened of its weight of sin; no longer perplexed

<sup>1</sup> Isaiah i. 5.

<sup>2</sup> See the Confession in the opening of the Liturgy.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Tim. v. 6.

<sup>4</sup> 2 Kings v. 15.

<sup>5</sup> Acts iii. 8.

with the distracting and vain attempt to reconcile sin and peace; but free to offer our whole soul to Almighty God; we “serve him with a *quiet* mind,” and even amid the varied turmoil of a busy world, still “have our conversation in heaven <sup>1</sup>.”



#### 64. TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

*LORD, we beseech thee to keep thy household the Church in continual godliness, that through thy protection it may be free from all adversities, and devoutly given to serve thee in good works, to the glory of thy name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

BY praying for the Church under the comparison of a *household*, we are taught to consider ourselves as praying, not only for the assembled congregation of which we form a part, but for all congregations, wherever worshipping: for their ministers also, and others who bear rule and office therein; that they may be kept “in continual godliness,” watching for the householder’s return.

It was by this comparison that the Son of Man illustrated to his disciples, the zeal, the fidelity, the order, the watchfulness, which he should expect from them, and their successors for ever. Nor can we imagine a more beautiful appeal to our sense of

<sup>1</sup> Phil. iii. 20.



moral responsibility<sup>1</sup>. It is to a deep feeling of this responsibility that we must trace that union of boldness and caution; of inflexible firmness, and unfailing charity; with which the stewards of the household—the ministers of the word,—strive to uphold the laws of their absent Master. They dare not compromise their own integrity, by allowing any failure of obedience to *Him* for whom they are acting, and to whom they must give account. Hence too the *people* committed to their charge, may see the reasonableness of receiving with meekness and pure affection, the word of life, even though administered by fellow-servants. The *authority* is *not* that of the *steward*, but of his *Lord*. The power of the *preacher* may be *foolishness*; but the word preached is the word of God.

Having prayed that this household of God may be “kept in continual godliness,” we proceed to implore, that it may be “free from all adversities,” through his protection, and be “devoutly given to “serve him.” Godliness is a good step towards gaining protection. Possessing this, we need not fear lest protection should fail, as dangers may arise. The history of the Christian Church gives sufficient proof that God is its protector, and that his cloud of defence doth rest upon it. Even in the early days of

<sup>1</sup> Mark xiii. 34—37. “For the Son of Man is as a man taking  
“a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants,  
“and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch.  
“Watch ye therefore; for ye know not when the master of the  
“house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cock crowing, or in  
“the morning: lest, coming suddenly, he find you sleeping. And  
“what I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch.”

the Church, when her sons were driven far from the abodes of men—when some desert rock was their only altar; some hidden cave their temple; and darkness a welcome covering to hide them—*He* was their light, their shelter, their defence. In succeeding ages, during the most violent persecutions, He has ever been with them. How often, even in this our favoured land, has danger seemed to threaten; when lo! His Will has removed it. Scarcely has the cloud of terror arisen, before the eye of faith has seen the bow therein. The Lord commanded, and the cloud passed harmless. But He, who hath hitherto been a protector, justly claims that we be “devoutly given to serve him in good works, to the glory of his name, through Jesus Christ our Lord.” The minister and his people are equally bound to this service. Let the minister take heed both to himself and his doctrine. Let him be “an example to the believer, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity<sup>1</sup>.” Let his doctrine be sincere, declaring the *whole* law of God: let him exhort with authority; reprove with charity; and watch with unceasing anxiety: “warning and teaching every man in all wisdom, that he may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus<sup>2</sup>.” If the people hear and obey, ’tis well. If, however, they turn a deaf ear to the warning voice, *this* at least let them remember, that the authority of him who utters it, is derived from God: an authority therefore which is not lessened towards them, by the unworthiness, or weakness of him to whom it is delegated. It con-

<sup>1</sup> 1 Tim. iv. 12.<sup>2</sup> Col. i. 28.

tinues for ever unchangeable; however fluctuating be the tide of human events, however wavering the faith of men. Let not the wicked hope, let not the faithful fear, lest God may forget us. What! if our Lord be gone a far journey, his errand is mercy and loving-kindness: He is gone to receive gifts from the Father, and transfer them to us; even the gift of the Holy Spirit. What! if He seem to be absent long—He is gone to prepare a place for *them*, who in *patience* possess their souls. What! if he dwell in heaven, in glory inaccessible—He is not far from any one of us; “I am with you, *always*, even to the “end of the world.”

Our prayer then should be, that grace may be vouchsafed to the whole household of the Church of God. That as servants of an absent Lord, they may severally fulfil, each in his station, the work assigned to them: that whether the Master return at even, or at midnight, or at the cock crowing, or in the morning, He may find them watching: find them still labouring; still praying for his aid; and animated to perseverance by the hope of his promised blessing<sup>1</sup>. Such, we trust, the Lord when he cometh, will take to himself; that where He is, they may be also. Under *His* guidance, they shall come

<sup>1</sup> Luke xii. 38, 40, 43 and 44. “And if he shall come in the “second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed “are those servants.”

“Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of Man cometh at an “hour when ye think not.”

“Blessed is that servant, whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall “find so doing.”

“Of a truth I say unto you, that he will make him ruler over all “that he hath.”

to Zion with songs, and to the holy city with joy ; and their end shall be, that they shall live—for ever holy, and for ever happy—in a house not made with hands ; a house eternal in the heavens, whose maker and builder is God.



## 65. TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

*O GOD, our refuge and strength, who art the author of all godliness ; be ready, we beseech thee, to hear the devout prayers of thy Church ; and grant that those things which we ask faithfully, we may obtain effectually, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

HE, who in the midst of his afflictions, has wisely sought support and comfort from religion, will understand the full force and beauty of the expressions here applied to God ; as “ our refuge and strength.” “ O Lord, I will exalt thee,” saith the prophet, “ for thou hast been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in their distress, a refuge from the storm <sup>1</sup>.” Indeed, when driven out from every other shelter, forsaken of every other friend, and desolate ; *then* it is, that we learn to value God, as our “ sure refuge.” *Then* are we supported by the reflection, that there is ONE BEING, from under

<sup>1</sup> Isaiah xxv. 1 and 4.

whose sheltering wing no enemy can drive us ; ONE who will *never* leave, *never* forsake us. So surely is he man's only refuge in the *stormy* seasons of life, that even the *careless* ones *then* flee to him. In sickness, or upon a death-bed, the soul, though satisfied hitherto with the world, pants at length after some peace which the world cannot give—some refreshing shelter, some safe covert, whither it may flee, and be at rest<sup>1</sup>. Happy that man, who by grace so sanctifies the days which by God's merciful loving kindness are added to him, that he takes heed to the call of David: " O taste and see, that the " Lord is good." Still happier *he*, who, having sought the Lord, finds grace to repent ; gains the help he needed ; and can declare with the Psalmist, " before I was in trouble I went astray, but now " have I known thy word<sup>2</sup>." When the sinner is thus converted from the error of his ways, how does he rejoice in his " refuge and strength !" As once, in the days of health and ease, he neglected and perhaps despised religion, so now after long affliction, and by a merciful compulsion<sup>3</sup>, he lives a witness of its power ; a monument of its victory.

The title of " author of all godliness" is justly *His*, to whom we pray : the power and will to lead a godly life being the work of the Holy Spirit, which is the gift of God to every man who asks it<sup>4</sup> through Jesus Christ. Inasmuch therefore as God

<sup>1</sup> Psalm xlii. 1. and lv. 6.

<sup>2</sup> Psalm cxix. 67.

<sup>3</sup> Luke xiv. 23. " And the Lord said unto the servant, Go out " into the highways and hedges, and *compel* them to come in, that my " house may be filled."

<sup>4</sup> Luke xi. 10. " For *every one* that asketh, receiveth,"



bestows the gift itself, he is rightly accounted the author of those benefits which flow from it.

The Collect contains two *petitions*; and we ourselves annex the conditions, upon which we venture to hope for an answer to them. We profess to offer “*devout* prayers;” and to “ask *faithfully*” what we hope to “obtain *effectually*.”

To pray *devoutly*, is to pray—disengaged from all worldly thoughts: wrapt in holy communing; laying open our hearts in deep sorrow for sin, in holy resolutions of amendment, in earnest supplication for divine aid; and offering up our whole soul to God. To ask *faithfully*—is to “ask in faith, no-  
“thing wavering<sup>1</sup>;” to be steadfast, staying ourselves upon the Lord, as the giver of all good things; and remembering that “*he* is faithful, who hath promised<sup>2</sup>.” Should the answer seem to be delayed, let us bear in mind, that we prayed to obtain *effectually*, or to the furthering our *final* good. Now the omniscient God, our heavenly Father, knoweth beforehand, whether the object of our prayer, if gained, would promote or hinder our salvation. If by gaining our wish, we should lose our souls, he in *mercy* denies our prayer; for he is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to everlasting life. Thus, when our Lord assured his disciples—  
“*all* things whatever ye shall ask in prayer, *believ-*  
“*ing*, ye shall receive<sup>3</sup>”—the faith he inculcated, was to have for its object, not only *his own power*, but the *Father’s love*. “He that spared not his own  
“Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he

<sup>1</sup> James i. 6.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. x. 23.

<sup>3</sup> Matth. xxi. 22.

“not with him also freely give us all things,” to the keeping our souls in life<sup>1</sup>.

Faith therefore in the power and promises of the Saviour, through whom we offer all our prayers, should be blended with faith in the love of the Father to whom we offer them. If they be granted agreeably to our wishes, let us thankfully acknowledge the mercy of the Giver. If they seem to be denied, let us, *by faith*, see in the denial, an extension of mercy; which either withholds to day, only to give with enlarged bounty to-morrow; or keeps back the gift altogether, lest the grant of it should lead our souls to death. As our *God*, he is *able* to grant us *all* things—as our *Father*, he will mercifully grant us *only* such things, as will forward our *final* good. Surely the appeal of our blessed Lord to our feelings of self-interest and self-love is not less unanswerable than condescending—“What is  
“a man profited, if he gain the whole world, and  
“lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in  
“exchange for his soul<sup>2</sup>?”

<sup>1</sup> Rom. viii. 32.

<sup>2</sup> Matth. xvi. 24—27. “Then said Jesus unto his disciples,  
“If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up  
“his cross and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall  
“lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.  
“For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and  
“lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his  
“soul? For the Son of Man shall come in the glory of his Father,  
“with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to  
“his works.”

## 66. TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

*O LORD, we beseech thee, absolve thy people from their offences; that through thy bountiful goodness we may all be delivered from the bands of those sins, which by our frailty we have committed. Grant this, O heavenly Father, for Jesus Christ's sake, our blessed Lord and Saviour. Amen.*

THE holy Scriptures represent man, in a *sinful* state, under a variety of painful images. The sinner is compared sometimes to one leprous<sup>1</sup>; at other

<sup>1</sup> The leprosy is a disease which had its origin in Egypt, and became dreadfully prevalent among the Jews. It was of a nature peculiarly distressing both in its effects upon the sufferer, and in the prejudice it excited against him amongst his neighbours. It not only defaced the person, but it subdued the mind; covering the skin with dry scurfy scales, and rendering it rough; and overpowering the mind by alternate seasons of stupor and distress: the leper was sometimes subdued by his hopeless infirmity; and at other times keenly alive to the disgust which others felt towards him. The disease was so very contagious in hot countries, that a leprous person was cut off from all communication with mankind; neither civil nor religious intercourse being permitted to him. He lived alone, in all the dreadful misery of desolateness. To attempt any healing by medicine, was considered vain and impious. It was left for the Saviour of the world to show his omnipotence by healing in a word that disease, which human art and wisdom, for ages, laboured to heal; but laboured in vain.

Sin is the leprosy of the soul. It mars the beauty of holiness—It paralyzes the powers of the understanding and perverts the feelings of the heart. It renders the sinner unmeet for the communion of saints, and the society of God and his angels. The sinner, in

times to one who is blind ; nay, the hardened sinner is like unto one dead. His sin—like the appalling spot of *leprosy*—separates him from those with whom otherwise he might hold converse : he is cut off from the presence of God. Or he walks in *blindness* : in ignorance, and danger ; in pain, and terror : ignorant of duty ; in danger of death eternal : and, though terrified by the opening prospect of future retribution, he sees neither the road of safety, nor the guide to lead him to it. Is he deep plunged in vice ? insensible equally to the word of God, and the voice of conscience ? he is then *dead* while he liveth.

But however the sins of men may vary in kind and in degree, yet *we all* have sinned, and come short of the glory of God. In *his* pure sight “ can *no* man living be justified.” The collect therefore represents us *all*, under a general character, as naturally *captives*, held in bonds : made free only by the gracious goodness of God. And a state of willing sin is, too truly, a state of captivity—a captivity the most galling. He who endures imprisonment of the body, cannot be regarded without a feeling of compassion proportioned to his sufferings. But suppose that you were contemplating the most abject prisoner which the darkest dungeon ever inclosed ; picture him in extremity—his wasted limbs sinking under their burden ; his listless form remaining fixed to

reference to God and heaven, stands *alone*—without a friend ; without a home. There is no peace till the sin be healed.

Yet *ONE* is ready to be more than a friend. The Saviour who healed the leper, is ready not only to pity the sinner, but to heal *him* also—The same voice calls to each, “ come to *me* and be at *rest*.”

the spot on which first it sunk ; his hopeless eye not raised even to the pitying voice of the friend who visits him ; his tongue mute ; his mind conquered ; and his moody silence indicating the secret workings of a sorrow, which yet dreads its completion, when captivity shall be exchanged for death—picture such a captive ; even *his* misery is as nothing compared with the misery of the captive to sin. Death, which sets the former free, binds the latter in an everlasting chain. View the *spiritual* captive, when the time approaches for *his* departure. He too has neither strength, nor hope. He too raises not his eye to the prisoner's friend, who yet seeks to ransom them who hate their chains<sup>1</sup>. Mark, in *him* also, the secret workings of conscience ! his soul is racked with dismal apprehensions of what awaits him. That *hereafter*, which he has so long disregarded, at last terrifies him with the prospect of darkness for ever. If aught might show the *misery* of wickedness, it were the last scene of existence, in the hardened, and impenitent—the *willing* slave.

And because no man can tell how soon the band of sin, which now binds him, may be more closely rivetted, unless he strive to burst it, and pray for strength to aid his endeavours thereto, it well becomes every humble soul to pray, in the beautiful language of our Collect, to be delivered even from *unwilling* sin ; “ from the bands of those sins, which “ by our *frailty* we have committed.” It were presumptuous to pray for pardon if we continue to sin

<sup>1</sup> Isaiah lxi. 1. “ He hath sent me,” saith Christ, “ to proclaim “ *liberty* to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that “ are *bound*.”



wilfully. We sin too much for our holiness, too much for our peace, too much for the honour of God, even when we strive to do our best: because we come short of the glory of God; and fail of that perfection which is required of us, but which we can never attain, until it be given to us and for us by Jesus Christ. “If *any man* say that he has no sin, “he deceiveth himself.” Therefore in the Litany, as in this Collect, we humbly pray for forgiveness, not for sins of *commission* only, but even for sins of *omission*—for “negligences, and ignorances.” So *progressive* indeed is the character of sin, that the first thought of it is to be resisted with as much resolution and energy, as if all the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil, were arrayed against us. From the moment you encourage what approaches to sin, by yielding to any natural infirmity of spirit, by palliating any neglect of duty, by compromising the honour of God—from that moment you are a slave. At first, your band sits comparatively easy upon you; but it will soon become heavier, and more galling; every valuable power of the mind will be rendered ineffective, when under the controul of misguided passion; every honourable feeling perverted; every noble faculty deadened. The soul, like a vast prison house, will be darkness, and remorse, and horror.

Reader! perhaps thou art not thus fatally enchained: not altogether the world’s base slave. Yet *some* sin may have *too great* influence over you,—and *any* is too great—leading you a willing captive. Examine thyself. What is the sin which doth most easily beset thee? Against *that* thou

shouldest set thyself; and most diligently practise its opposite grace. Art thou inclined to pride? the more steadily exercise humility. Does the lust of the flesh drag you in its chain? be the more watchful to avoid whatever is impure: encourage holy thoughts, and remember that the happiness of heaven will consist in the perfection of holiness. Does indignation against wrong rouse thine anger? be the more charitable to others' faults, more strict in scrutinizing thy own. Dost thou love the world, when it goes smoothly with thee? remember its vanity. Art thou repining, when the days of sorrow come upon thee? turn to a suffering Saviour; who, in the midst of his sufferings, was still the beloved of the Father, and is now glorified in heaven. If *he* suffered for *thy* sake, to save thee from the power of thy sins here and final punishment due to sinners, surely thou mayest patiently bear thine own sorrow, for thine own sake. Consider, why doth God afflict thee? why doth he chasten thee? but that, like the prodigal, thou mayest *come to thyself*, and return to thy father with joy<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> There is something peculiarly touching in that "*coming to himself*." We involuntarily pause, and picture to ourselves this prodigal in a situation so painful, so affecting, so instructive—An alien from his home; the scorn of strangers; friendless; desolate; a living monument of the dreadful consequences of forsaking God.

So long as his life was prosperous, he was blind to his real state; insensible to the warnings of Providence, and the calls of conscience; his reason darkened; his powers paralysed—dead, for a time, in trespasses and sin. At length, afflictions come. Troubles compass him around; and he is a changed being. He awakes from his deathlike dream. He becomes sensible of the delusions under which he has been labouring. As the morning mists from the

In short, since in this our probationary state, sins of *frailty*—of imperfection—form a band, which

mountains, so from his soul the vapoury visions roll away. He is painfully alive to past sin, and present misery. Remorse succeeds. Humbled and subdued, no false shame deters him from avowing his change of heart: he resolves to retrace his steps homeward. Above the meanness of pride, he disregards whatever mortification may await him. He is aware that upon returning, he must present himself an indigent, degraded spendthrift, in the presence of his Father's household, where once he had borne himself so vainly in all the pride and haughtiness of youthful independence: but this consideration weighs not with him now. He has *come to himself*. Worldly pride soon yields to a heavenly spirit. Misery too has removed the veil in which prosperity had shrouded him. He sees that the wages of sin is death. Affliction has cleared his reason; he feels that the whole world is not worth an immortal soul: sorrow has purified his affections; he mourns his ingratitude, and loves again his God. Thus self-condemned, he rises above the dread of shame from men; and his only aim now is to gain pardon of his Father; to be reconciled to him, whose house he forsook and whose love he forfeited. "I will arise, and go to my Father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son." What a scene! where is the child who feels not for the prodigal? where the parent, whose heart does not melt at the humiliating burst of returning duty—"I will arise, and go to my father."

Mark hence the uses of adversity! How often do men, when the world supplies them with means of gratifying their every desire, lull their souls into fatal ease: they eat, drink, and are merry; reckless of futurity. How often do they live, like the prodigal, in a stupid insensibility to the consequences of irreligion, and the dreadful certainty, that "for all these things, God will call them to judgment." At length, sickness, or poverty, or distress, or some sorrow comes upon them. Then they awake. They *come to themselves*. They too are humbled by affliction—they too stand self-condemned—they too rise superior to false shame—they too in the spirit of true repentance confess their sin; leave their wanderings; and return unto their Father.

Art thou afflicted? Let affliction work its proper work. Let it

binds every man; *they* are the wisest, who most sincerely strive, by penitence and prayer, to gain *His* aid, who alone can burst the weakest bands, and is powerful to loose the strongest. Seek then thy Redeemer! He will so strengthen you, if you pray for and desire his aid, that you shall come forth from your bands free and unharmed. Make the effort; God will bless it. "Cease to do evil"—It is evil which enslaves thee. "Learn to do well"—Blessed are they who do well; God will render "to them, "who by patient continuance in *well-doing* seek for "glory and honour and immortality, *eternal* life<sup>1</sup>." Covet the freedom which they only can enjoy, who have conquered sin, and serve the Lord in spirit and in truth. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, *there*"—and there alone—"is liberty<sup>2</sup>."

lead thee back to thy heavenly Father, whom thou hast forsaken. Whence and when did God call his chosen of old? Was it from a state of ease and in the days of their prosperity? He called them out of the land of strangers—He called them in the days of their oppression, and poverty, and lowliness. "In the furnace of *affliction*" saith Jehovah, "have I chosen thee," O Israel. David also—to what period does *he* refer his sincere repentance; his living faith; his cheerful obedience?—To the hour of his *affliction*. "*Before I* "was in *trouble*, I went wrong; but *now* have I known thy word." Arise then—thou afflicted, but not forsaken—"Come to thyself." Arise, and return to thy Father. He will accept thy contrition: he will give token of his acceptance; for when yet thou art far off, he will meet thee—scarcely will the thought of thy renewed heart have been formed, 'ere he will bless it. He will graciously cherish it with the dew of his blessing; and the sanctified thought, so blessed, will bring that peace, which passeth all understanding, even the peace which God giveth to the penitent; and which is the happy earnest here of a glorious joy hereafter, which shall fear no more the touch of sorrow; nor know ought of change through the endless ages of eternity.—See the note, page 282.

<sup>1</sup> Rom. ii. 7.<sup>2</sup> 2 Cor. iii. 17.

67. TWENTY-FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER  
TRINITY.

*STIR up, we beseech thee, O Lord, the wills of thy faithful people; that they plenteously bringing forth the fruit of good works, may of thee be plenteously rewarded, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

IN a spiritual course, as in every other pursuit, success cannot reasonably be expected, without the concurrence of the *Will*. Therefore, in this Collect,—the last of the Sunday-Collects for the year—we very appropriately beseech Almighty God, to stir up the *Wills* of his faithful people. We thus virtually express our belief, that all our services of prayer, and penitence and praise, will be fruitless, if the heart be not engaged; if the *Will* act not, like an unwearied spring, to give “*continuance* in well “doing.”

The propriety of the petition is strengthened, when we consider it with reference to its object—“that plenteously bringing forth the fruit of good “works, we may of God be plenteously rewarded.” The Collect represents our Judge, in his character of Lord of the harvest. At *that* harvest, which is the end of the world<sup>1</sup>, our reward, though altogether

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xiii. 39.



undeserved, will be apportioned to the measure of the good fruit we bring<sup>1</sup>; and we cannot *plenteously* bring forth that fruit, without an unfailing perseverance, an unceasing exertion, which nothing can supply, but a resolved *Will*; which as it is given by the Spirit of God to all who pray for it, so is it supported by the same Spirit in all who seek and trust in it.

In preparing even for a temporal harvest, what diligence is required, what care, what patient faith! The ground is to be broken up with *diligence*, and made ready to receive the seed. No sooner does the seed shoot up, than the utmost *care* is required, not only to remove every stone which chokes vegetation; but to drive away the birds of the air which would devour the seed sown, and to pluck up the weeds which, if permitted to grow, would choke and destroy it. What patient *faith* too does the husbandman exercise! Not only does he expect that the dry seed he sows, when fostered by the genial dews of heaven, shall spring up into a beautiful plant; but he looks for its preservation through the extremes of cold and heat; through the winter's frost, and the summer's drought: and if, in an angry season of storm and tempest, he fears for a moment lest the labour of his hands should be blasted, and he reap not in the harvest; his fear soon subsides: he has known the goodness of God aforetime; he trusts to it now; and in the spirit of faith, still offers up the humble prayer of our Church, "that it may please God to give and preserve to his use the

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xxv. 23. and Luke xix. 17.

“ kindly fruits of the earth, so as in *due time* he may  
“ enjoy them.”

*Thus* also it is with the *spiritual* husbandman.  
“ The seed is the word of God <sup>1</sup>.” The heart is the  
field, from which the Lord expects fruits of holiness.  
In its natural state it is like the earth, under curse <sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Luke viii. 11. “ The seed is the word of God.” Compare with this parable the following passage from Isaiah—a passage of scripture strikingly illustrative of the comparison here drawn, and in itself equally beautiful and animating. “ For as the rain cometh  
“ down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but  
“ watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it  
“ may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater; so shall my  
“ word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return  
“ unto me void; but it shall accomplish that which I please, and  
“ it shall prosper in the thing whereto I send it. For ye shall  
“ go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and  
“ the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees  
“ of the field shall clap their hands. Instead of the thorn shall  
“ come up the fir-tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the  
“ myrtle-tree: and it shall be to the Lord for a name, for an ever-  
“ lasting sign that shall not be cut off.” Isaiah lv. 10—13.

<sup>2</sup> How striking a proof is it of the awful nature of sin, that in consequence of one man’s sin, not only was his own condition so changed, that from being created in the image of God, to be a companion of angels, he sunk, degraded to a child of wrath—but the beasts of the forest, and the fowls of the air, all became at enmity one with another. Man—their lord—they either fled from, or destroyed; and even the inanimate ground was brought under curse: “ Cursed  
“ is the *ground, for thy sake.*”

That recovery was possible, is mercy infinite. And that recovery should in some degree depend, both in the natural and moral world, upon the labour of man, is one among the more conspicuous instances on record, which shew the wisdom of God to be infinite also. For an infinite variety of channels are thus opened for the varying, and restless energies of man; and those powers of mind and body, which, if not called into action by the imperious necessity of providing for the sustentation of life, would be employed too often in disturbing the repose and well-being of society, are now necessarily,

The one of itself bringeth forth thorns and briers—The other is, by nature, only evil continually<sup>1</sup>. But as the ground is still capable of producing, by labour, those fruits, which once it gave spontaneously; and yieldeth little or much, in proportion as the soil be good or bad, and the labour sparing or abundant—so the heart bears that fruit, upon due *cultivation*, which in a state of innocence it had borne *naturally*: and though the dew of God's blessing can alone fertilize, yet the increase is in proportion to the honesty or the faithlessness—the goodness—of the heart whence it springs<sup>2</sup>, and to the attention or neglect bestowed upon its cultivation.

Whoso then expects to be holy without the study of God's word, encourages a vain and foolish expectation: and language has no term sufficiently strong to express a just sense of his folly. As well might the husbandman who soweth no seed, expect at the time of harvest, to see in his neglected fields the golden fruits of industry. Rather should we cultivate our heart with the *diligence*, the *care*, the *patient faith* of a wise and cautious husbandman. We must procure the seed—we must take of the word of God. The hard heart must be *diligently* broken up, that it may be fitted to receive the word: for as the seed cannot properly quicken and vegetate,

though unconsciously, directed to establish *general* peace and prosperity, at the very time that their aim is—the advantage of the *individual*.

<sup>1</sup> Gen. vi. 5.

<sup>2</sup> Luke viii. 15. “But that on the good ground are they, which “in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and “bring forth fruit with patience.”

unless it sink deep into the soil; so the word of God must sink deep into the heart, before it can be a living principle abiding there. And when the first beginning of fruit—the first successful struggle against evil—shows itself, let the most watchful *care* be adopted, lest the temptations of the world, like the fowls of the air, pluck it up, and render our labours vain. Let there also be a patient *faith*. Under the sternest severity of adversity; under the most alluring influence of prosperity; we must equally hold fast our faith in the Lord of the harvest, that the season of trial destroy not the fruit of our toil. To strengthen this faith, let us call to mind his wonders of old time; when even amid the temptations of pleasure we found no rest but in his service; when in seasons of dismay we trusted in him, and he saved us; when in either case we waited for him, and he blessed us.

Thus, in this last of the Sunday-collects, does our Church urge upon us the strongest possible motive to offer, without ceasing, those prayers with which in the former Collects she has so liberally furnished us. Wisely considering that without perseverance, our prayers must end in disappointment, she reminds us, that the harvest is not yet. We must “in *patience* “possess our souls;” and, like the supplicating leader of Israel, hold up unwearied hands<sup>1</sup>; looking for a *future* answer to our prayer—even at the great harvest of the world. And well may the toiling servant of the Lord thus support himself! glorious indeed is the prospect opened to him of gaining sure recompence of reward! Come but *that* harvest, then

<sup>1</sup> Exod. xvii. 11, 12.

we shall reap, if *now* we faint not: shall reap for every good word and work, a rich reward—rich as unmerited. “He that now goeth forth and weepeth, “bearing *precious* seed, shall doubtless come again “rejoicing, and bring his sheaves with him<sup>1</sup>.” Every act of self-denial: every instance of an evil habit corrected, or a good habit strengthened; all our services of prayer and penitence and praise; our ready submission to the afflictions laid upon us; our forbearance with “men that of malice persecute and “hate us;” our benevolence to the sick and needy, and ignorant; shall all be graciously accepted for Christ’s sake<sup>2</sup>: for his sake they shall even be rewarded with a fulness equalled only by that infinite love of God, which accepts the worthiness of his Son as the meritorious ground of pardon upon earth, and happiness in heaven, for the humble, and penitent, and contrite. In short, such is the blessed change which death will effect in the state of the faithful, that none can worthily tell the perfection of that eternal rest, which then remaineth for the people of God<sup>3</sup>.

Labour *thou* then—for thy labour is not in vain

<sup>1</sup> Psalm cxxvi. 6. By “bearing precious seed” is meant, the receiving into the heart none other seed than the word of God; and presenting none other fruits than the fruits of righteousness—those precious fruits, which spring from precious seed. Some will present tares as the fruit of their labour—but they are the fruit either of unrighteousness or self-righteousness; and neither of these are “precious in the sight of the Lord.” *They* will be bound in bundles, and burned in unquenchable fire. The wheat—the wheat alone—is gathered to the garner.

<sup>2</sup> Matth. x. 42.

<sup>3</sup> Heb. iv. 9. See page 255.



in the Lord—labour “plenteously to bring forth the “fruit of good works;” so shall thy prayer for grace be answered, and the dew of the blessing of God—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost—prosper the work of thy hand upon thee : till having patiently continued in this well-doing, thou wilt find diligent labour well ended, watchful care amply recompensed, and patient faith “plenteously rewarded;” through the merits of the same Saviour; the influence of the same Sanctifier; the infinite and undeserved mercy of the same Almighty God !

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## 68. ST. ANDREW'S DAY.

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ST. ANDREW was of the city of Bethsaida, which lay on the north-east shore of the lake of Gennesareth, at the influx of the river Jordan. He died a Martyr by Crucifixion. His Cross was of a peculiar construction, formed like the letter X. The time of his death is not known; but his martyrdom is commemorated immediately before advent; because as he was the first who found the Messiah, he is considered especially fitted, even by his death, to lead us to a more ready acceptance of the Saviour.

Bethsaida was originally a small fishing town, but became famous, under the name of Julia—that name having been given to the place, in honour of Julia, the daughter of Augustus Cæsar.

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*ALMIGHTY GOD, who didst give such grace unto thy holy Apostle St. Andrew, that he readily obeyed the calling of thy Son Jesus Christ, and followed him without delay ; grant unto us all, that we being called by thy holy word, may forthwith*

*give up ourselves obediently to fulfil thy holy commandments, through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

OF so mixed a character are our minds, that we frequently require mixed motives to fulfil our good resolutions, and accomplish our holy endeavours: we find moreover, that our heavenly Father has mercifully adapted the gospel to meet and correct this imperfection of our moral state. Does the promise of reward fail in leading men to what is good? denunciation of punishment may assist, by terrifying them from what is evil. Is regard towards our fellow-creatures an insufficient motive to social duties? it may then avail to know, that a conscientious discharge of these duties, is accounted as duty done to the Lord; and a wilful neglect of *them* considered as a neglect of HIM <sup>1</sup>. Hence also, the characters

<sup>1</sup> To encourage us in an undeviating course of duty and charity towards our fellow-creatures, in all humility endeavouring to imitate Him who was kind to “the thankful and to the unthankful;” to persevere in such a course, even when we may have found our honesty overreached, and our benevolence imposed upon—our divine Teacher has plainly pointed out to us the imperative obligations not less of our duty to our neighbour, than our duty to God; upon this *christian* principle of action—“To do *all*, as unto *God*.” If the first table of the law is to be observed, the second table is to be also observed: *both* having been written by Jehovah. None who acknowledge God, deny that they owe to *him* such obedience as he requires: none deny the importance—the sanctity and authority,—of the *first* table of the law. Now our Lord declares, that “the *second* is *like* unto it”—sharing the *like* importance, because hallowed by the *like* sanctity and enjoined by the *like* authority. Matth. xxii. 39.

To illustrate this principle, the Son of God presents to us, in a description of unequalled interest, the different recompense which

of the good and great are conspicuously set forth for our benefit; that where precept fails to influence us, *example* may succeed.

The introduction therefore, by our Church, of Collects adapted expressly to days set apart for the commemoration of Apostles and Saints, tends to benefit us, by calling our attention to their *examples*, as supplying a powerful incentive to holy perseverance on our own part. In them we see the power of holiness brought into action. We find religion giving contentment under poverty; meekness under provocation; patience under suffering; courage in meeting death, and fortitude in enduring the pains of it. Even the martyr is unmoved under the most agonizing extremity of bodily suffering, and the most

at the last day of account will await him who loved his neighbour as himself, and him who loved him not. Whilst charity is animated to perseverance, selfishness is alarmed from indifference. The righteous are graciously assured, that every act of kindness towards the least of the afflicted brethren of Christ—the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the sick, and the prisoner—will then be considered as having been done unto *him*: “inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto *me*. Then shall the king say unto them, “come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world.” On the other hand, the selfish are warned, that if they do not feel for others’ woes—if they neglect the wants of their poorer brethren, and disregard the sorrows of the afflicted—they will be considered as neglecting and disregarding their Saviour and their God. “Inasmuch as ye did it *not* to one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it *not* unto *me*.”

The whole of the 25th chapter of Matthew instructs us as to our religious and social duties, in language at once so plain, that all may comprehend its aim, and feel the instruction it is intended to convey; yet so magnificent, that the most powerful imagination fails to embody the idea of its grandeur, and the loftiest spirit cannot fully conceive the sublimity of the scene presented to it.

painful trials of the soul's fidelity: ONE walketh with him through the fire—even the Son of God, whose promise none can weaken. “I will *never* leave thee—*never* forsake thee.”

The character now proposed for our contemplation is that of St. Andrew; who was a disciple of John the Baptist, and afterwards the first-called of the Messiah <sup>1</sup>. For some months after he had found the Messiah he seems to have been only an occasional hearer of the word of Christ. It was not till after the miraculous draught of fishes, that he became a devoted apostle. *Then* it was that the fisherman on the lake of Gennesareth, was made “a fisher of men” <sup>2</sup> among the nations of the world.

By attentively considering the conduct of St. Andrew, both as a disciple, and an apostle, it will be our own fault, if we be not induced to “go, and do likewise.”

His early seeking for an opportunity to converse with *Him*, whom his master—John the Baptist—had pointed out as the Messiah; his perseverance in exercising his reason, and forming a considerate judgment upon the claim which Jesus laid to the Messiahship—these circumstances mark him as having, habitually, a religious frame of mind; dili-

<sup>1</sup> John i. 41. “He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, we have found the Messias, which is, being interpreted, the Christ.”

The whole scene is drawn with so much beauty, and the characters are presented to us with so much spirit, that we must be cold of heart indeed, if we do not catch a spark from the divine fervour, which animated St. Andrew and his brethren.

<sup>2</sup> Matth. iv. 19. “And he saith unto them, follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.”

gently searching after truth, and joyfully embracing it. Convinced that Jesus was the promised Messiah, he instantly sought out his brother; "we have found the Messias:" and he brought him to Jesus. His alacrity on this occasion, is strikingly indicative of "an honest and true heart," which having heard the word, keeps it, and goes on its way rejoicing: hearing the word gladly, and pursuing the labours of this life with increased diligence and cheerfulness, having found *him*, who is "the way" to life everlasting. When at length he was called by the Lord to a higher service in the gospel-kingdom, he instantly obeyed—"straightway leaving his nets, "and following Christ<sup>1</sup>:" thereby exhibiting a decision of character, which in all other matters is highly laudable, but which, in religion, is beyond praise.

Thus it should be with ourselves. In the common ordering of God's providence, we may safely be engaged in our worldly business, and yet exercise, with the fisherman of Palestine, our Christian calling in alacrity and perseverance. We may give due heed to the concerns of this world, and at the same time gladly receive the Messiah: "seeking *first* the "kingdom of God and his righteousness;" trusting that "all other things" needful for our souls' welfare, will "be added unto us." Occasions however will sometimes occur, when higher exertion is necessary—a more decided choice of the service of God. The entanglements of the world are then at once to be broken through,—its pleasures renounced—its

<sup>1</sup> Matth. iv. 20.



cares and sorrows met, not with patience only, but with cheerfulness. If on such occasions, the act be painful, as “plucking out a right eye” or “cutting off a right hand,” the effort must be made. The sin is to be plucked out—the evil propensity cut off—the worldly advantage disregarded—the tempting pleasure renounced. All must be *decision*. We must “*straightway*” obey the call; and walk with God<sup>1</sup>. Such obedience will *prove* us faithful to our

<sup>1</sup> “And *Enoch* walked with God.” Gen. v. 24. “Noah was a just man, and perfect in his generations; and *Noah* walked with God.” Gen. vi. 9.

This description of patriarchal religion, though instructive to us all, is particularly calculated to impress upon the minds of young persons, the advantage of *habitual* piety: for by the expression—*walking with God*—we are to understand, a course of life passed in *constant* reference to the power, and will, and love of God; who, whilst he is invisible, is yet about our path, and about our bed, and spieth out all our ways. Indeed, the illustration points out in a clear and familiar manner, why a pious course, under the ordinary circumstances of life, is the best way of providing against any sudden approach of those contingent evils of it to which we are all liable—whether the evils of sickness, and accident; or the loss of fortune, fame, and friends. Under such trials the world cannot support us. Our help *then* cometh only of the Lord.

When a young man walketh with a father, or a friend, he is happy in knowing, that in case of need, help and counsel are near. He assures himself, that though he does not always actually feel the supporting hand of his friend, or require his father's more immediate guidance, yet let some difficulty occur, or some danger present itself—guidance is instantly vouchsafed; defence is surely granted. The companion becomes the helper and defender.

Thus the young Christian should *habitually* walk with God—should commune with him as a father and a friend; learn from the Bible what his Will is; and pray for grace to practise it: he should live under an abiding—a continual—sense of His spiritual presence; he should watchfully abstain from error, and endeavour to keep that straight and narrow path, constantly pointed out to him by the word

Master in heaven. Scorning hesitation, and rising superior to excuses, let us, as St. Andrew did, "*forth-*" "*with* give up ourselves obediently to fulfil God's "holy commandments." Let every energy of the mind, every good feeling of the heart, every effort of intellect, every faculty of the soul, be henceforth dedicated to HIM, whom we profess ourselves bound

of truth. By searching the holy Scriptures, and by prayer for the Holy Spirit, he should draw nigh for guidance; for instruction; for comfort. This is *to walk with God*. They who thus, day by day, "acquaint themselves with God;" *they* find, that in the storms of life, however sudden be their approach, however furious their assault; the hand of Him, with whom they walk, is stretched out to save. They find, that with the calamity comes strength to bear up against it.

If *thou*—an afflicted pilgrim in the wilderness of life—hast experienced this happy truth; if *thy* heart, though deeply wounded by sorrow, yet finds itself still strong—still calm and peaceful—after all the severity of its complicated trials; wonder not. The Being, with whom thou hast walked, is a *present* help in time of trouble. He stretched out his hand, and in thy weakness his strength was made perfect. He saw thee stricken, and he raised thee—he saw thee wounded, and he healed thee—he saw thee sinking, and he saved thee. *Thou* hadst drawn nigh unto Him, and He did draw nigh unto *thee*.

Nor be discouraged from still holding thy holy course, because, thy trial being over, thou dost not feel the same vivid assurance of the helping hand of God. *He*—a true friend—gives us most assistance, when our need is greatest. "*As* thy days, *so* shall thy strength "*be*"—proportioned to thy need. Remember too, that the beloved Son of God, himself found more especial aid from his Father when his trials and distress did most grievously oppress him. Rest then in peace; and learn, in the recollection of past deliverances, to trust, that if future storms of sorrow burst upon thee, the same gracious and heavenly Father, with whom thou daily walkest, is present to befriend thee; the same voice, near to guide thee; the same hand, ready to support thee. May he be thy rich consolation here; thy glorious reward hereafter!

to serve, and honour, and love. In his service we wish to seem *faithful*. Let us *be* what we wish to *seem*.

This is to be a disciple indeed ! this is to be of the number of the faithful. This is also to be of the number of the happy. Reader ! wouldst *thou* be thus *happy* ? Be thus *faithful* ; and happiness is thine, through Jesus Christ our Lord.



## 69. ST. THOMAS' DAY.



ST. THOMAS, called Didymus. Each of these names means a Twin : Thomas being a Syriac, Didymus a Greek word. This Apostle was a Galilean. He preached in Mesopotamia, Parthia, and other countries of the East ; and there suffered death, A.D. 73.

It was the opinion of the late Bishop Heber, that the Apostle was martyred at MEILAPOOR, near to Madras\*.

The Syrian Christians, still remaining in India, have a Church which bears the name of the Apostle Thomas, and is the oldest in Malabar.



*ALMIGHTY and everlasting God, who for the more confirmation of the faith, didst suffer thy holy Apostle Thomas to be doubtful of thy Son's resurrection ; grant us so perfectly, and without all doubt, to believe in thy Son Jesus Christ, that our faith in thy sight may never be reprov'd. Hear us O Lord, through the same Jesus Christ, to whom with thee*

\* Heber's Journal, v. 3. p. 212.

*and the Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory, now and evermore. Amen.*

THE Evangelists, in delivering to us the history of the Gospel, have so strictly adhered to truth, that they declare even the failings of themselves and of their brethren. The cowardice of the disciples, who in the season of need "all forsook" Jesus "and fled<sup>1</sup>;" the fall of Peter, who denied the very Friend, for whom he had declared himself ready to die<sup>2</sup>; and the doubts of Thomas, who once proposed to go with his Master unto death<sup>3</sup>—*these* circumstances are recorded with a minute exactness, which not only stamps the record itself as true, but tends, in a striking manner, to confirm the other parts of sacred history, and thereby to confirm also our faith in it. Why—except for truth's sake—should men hand down facts, which manifestly tend to their own disgrace<sup>4</sup>?

<sup>1</sup> Matth. xxvi. 56.

<sup>2</sup> Mark xiv. 14.

<sup>3</sup> John xi. 16. "Then said Thomas, let us also go, that *we* may 'die with *Him*;' that is—with *Christ*; not with Lazarus.

In the 8th verse the disciples had remonstrated with Jesus, upon his proposing to go into Judæa again, for the sake of raising Lazarus from the dead; reminding him the Jews had threatened his life, and that he ought therefore to refrain from putting himself in their way. "Master, the Jews of late sought to stone thee, and goest 'thou thither again?' Upon their Master's persisting in his intention, they ceased to remonstrate; and, at the suggestion of Thomas, adopted the spirited resolution to accompany him, even though it were to his death: "Let us also go, that we may die with 'him.'"

<sup>4</sup> St. Peter dictated St. Mark's Gospel; yet he neither conceals, nor excuses his own sin in denying Christ.

Prophets and Apostles share this noble spirit of candour. Moses records the offence which deprived him of an entrance into Canaan

Hence our Church concludes that "Almighty God did suffer his holy Apostle Thomas to be doubtful of his Son's resurrection, *for the more confirmation of the faith.*" Her conclusion is just. The reason, indeed, upon which it is founded, holds good universally. In proportion to the extent of doubt and difficulty against which any fact is established, so is its certainty assured to us: truth—like the sun—then seeming to shine brightest, when emerging from the dark cloud which shadowed it. The Apostle Thomas persisted in not believing, till he could judge for himself upon the most satisfactory testimony: "unless I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe." The testimony was given; and the same decisive manner which marked the suspension of his faith, marked its confirmation: his answer—abrupt, short, and comprehensive—shews that the testimony he received was irresistible: he no longer hesitated; but believed, nothing doubting. In giving utterance to his changed feelings, amazement—admiration—joy—and gratitude, were all united in the memorable burst of admiration, 'my Lord and God!'

Thus we learn, that credulity is no part of faith. Christianity, far from requiring the sacrifice of our reason, demands a just exercise of it<sup>1</sup>. The lan-

—and more than once repeats the recital of it. Jonah records his sullen murmurings at the commands of God. David conceals not the avowal of his unworthiness. St. Paul unhesitatingly declares his early virulence as a persecutor of the Gospel of Christ.

A record thus published, bears in itself evidence of its truth.

<sup>1</sup> St. Peter has enjoined us to "be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh us a reason of the hope that is in



guage of the Gospel is still the same—"Handle me,

"us." A merciful providence has likewise supplied to us abundant evidence, to which we may apply our reason, and be thereby enabled to obey this apostolic injunction; shewing that our hope in Christ is no delusive expectation of a heated fancy, but the result of an enquiry, guided by the sober dictates of reason. Acts xxvi. 25.

Such indeed are the varied, but harmonizing evidences, in proof that Christianity is from God; the records of it, as preserved in the writings of Evangelists and Apostles, are so firmly established, both in their authenticity as to facts, and their genuineness as to the writers whose names they severally bear, that whilst the sneers of the wicked cannot invalidate them, nor the cavils of the sceptic disprove them, a calm and rational enquirer into their pretensions rises from his enquiry, with a firm and happy conviction that they are established in truth; and begin and end in God.

We have the evidence of miracles, which none but God could work; and of prophecies, the fulfilment of which none but God could accomplish. We have the according testimony unconsciously borne by various Heathen writers, in their allusion to events, persons, and places, mentioned by the Evangelists and Apostles: nor will any other discrepancy be found in comparing the one set of writers with the other, than such as proves that there was no collusion, but merely such different modes of speaking of the same event, alluding to the same person, or mentioning the same place, as must necessarily happen when different persons, at different times, and under different circumstances give their several accounts, with no other view than to state the truth. The very character of Jesus is one which no human ingenuity could have invented; and the whole scheme of redemption is marked with a perfection, which springs evidently from some higher than human intelligence, and which no human wisdom could have imagined.

But suppose all these, and others, the direct or indirect evidences to the truths of Christianity, were wanting—every good man hath a *witness* in *himself*. When in a life of holiness—a life of prayer, and penitence, and faith, and obedience, and hope—we find strength to resist temptation to evil; are enabled to exercise humility in prosperity and contentment in adversity; are patient under provocation and resigned under suffering; pure in our motives before God; true and just in our dealings before men; and supported in our arduous course of duty by the prospect of another and a better

“and see.” The doctrine of Christ challengeth enquiry. No man ever seriously set himself to an ingenuous examination of the Holy Scriptures, but he rose from the enquiry with a conviction, that they could have been revealed by the God of truth alone<sup>1</sup>. None ever applied to them in the time of trouble, without finding the promised support and comfort. None ever trusted in their sanctifying influence, and trusted in vain. “He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life<sup>2</sup>.”

It is, however, when labouring under the severer trials of life, that the professing disciple of Christ too often exhibits, in his own conduct, the doubting

world; *Then* the Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the “children of God”—*Then* we “glory in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ;” and rejoice to exemplify the assurance of St. John, that “He, who believeth on the Son of God, hath the witness in himself.” 1 John v. 10.

<sup>1</sup> We owe the powerful work of Lord Lyttelton “upon the conversion of St. Paul,” to a careful examination of the Holy Scriptures.

The noble author had been a sceptic, and in the daring spirit of scepticism had proposed to read the oracles of God for the purpose of shewing them to be false. He accordingly undertook the presumptuous task. In the course however of this scrutiny, Light broke in upon his hitherto darkened mind. It shone brighter as he advanced. He found the book supported by so clear evidence of prophecy, of miracles, of internal agreement and consistency—he traced, in its historical records, so perfect a harmony with known events elsewhere recorded—he perceived its doctrines to be so divine, its morality so pure, its fears and hopes so entirely adapted to the constitution of the human mind, that he doubted no longer of their divine origin. He who came to the work as a “busy mocker,” finished it, a humble adorer; confessing with Thomas, that he had at last found his Lord and his God.

<sup>2</sup> John v. 24.

heart of St. Thomas. *Possibly* this may be the very case with my Reader. Sorrows encompass you, or enemies oppress you, and you complain with the Psalmist: "they of *malice* persecute me," "without any offence or fault of me, O God." You doubt for a moment, and say, with the children of Israel at Meribah, "Is the Lord amongst us, or not<sup>1</sup>?" You require additional testimony to your faith. Behold then the Saviour! view him in his word! view him as there pictured. See the print of the nails in his hands—see his wounded side, and be not faithless but believing. He—who once endured those nails, and submitted to that wound for your sake—*He* will never forsake you. If in a moment of agony, you are surprised into the desponding lamentation of David, "Wherefore hidest thou thy face, and forgettest our affliction, and our oppression<sup>2</sup>?" Let faith bear up your sinking spirit. Adopt the more worthy confession, "This is my infirmity." Resolve to strengthen your faith by recalling past mercies. "I will remember thy wonders of old." You will at length exclaim in gratitude and joy, "Who is so great a God as our God<sup>3</sup>."

In one point of view, the example of the doubting Apostle may be held out to our *imitation*. He was faithless only till he could assure himself of the grounds of faith. The risen Saviour—risen, not yet to glory, but to the usual appearance of a being of this world—was to him so great a mystery, that he resolved to examine into it himself. Let us be per-

<sup>1</sup> Exod. xvii. 7.<sup>2</sup> Psalm xliv. 24.<sup>3</sup> Psalm lxxvii. 13.

suaded to do likewise. "Great is the mystery of "godliness<sup>1</sup>." Justification by the Son of God, and sanctification by the Spirit of God, are truths, which the faithful in Christ Jesus will ever joyfully declare. But let us not be satisfied with hearing the good tidings from others. Let us enquire and scrutinize for ourselves. Let us search diligently the Holy Scriptures. In them we shall find *Him*, of whom all the prophets have spoken; who united in his own person, the crucified victim, and the risen Saviour the despised teacher, and the glorified Redeemer; the man of sorrow, and the everlasting God. Above all, let us wait for Him in his service and holy ordinances. There, if any where—whilst the world is shut out, and our whole souls are wrapt in holy meditation upon the mysteries of redemption—*there* the eye of faith may still see the Saviour in the midst, "speaking peace to his people;" while with Thomas, every heart shall believe, and every tongue confess of the crucified and wounded Jesus, "My Lord, and my God!"

<sup>1</sup> 1 Tim. iii. 16.

## 70. THE CONVERSION OF ST. PAUL.

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ST. PAUL was a Jew, of the sect of the Pharisees. His Hebrew name—Saul—was changed sometime after his conversion, to the Roman name—Paul. He was born at Tarsus, a city of Cilicia, a province of the lesser Asia. The inhabitants of that city, in reward for their faithful adherence to Rome during the disaffection of other provinces, enjoyed the privileges of Roman citizens: on which account St. Paul, though by birth a Jew of Asia minor, speaks of himself as a “free born” Roman, in privilege.

Even in the punishment of her prisoners, Rome had respect to their alliance with the imperial city. If thus allied, they were not suffered to die by the disgraceful death of the cross. Therefore St. Paul was beheaded.

The Apostle's death took place in the year 67, during the reign of the cruel emperor Nero.

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*O GOD, who through the preaching of the blessed Apostle St. Paul, hast caused the light of the Gospel to shine throughout the world; grant we beseech thee, that we having his wonderful conversion in remembrance, may shew forth our thankfulness unto thee for the same, by following the holy doctrine which he taught; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

ST. PAUL, though not one of the Apostles chosen by Jesus Christ, during his sojourn upon earth, is known as the great Apostle of the Gentiles<sup>1</sup>. Those

<sup>1</sup> An Apostle is “one sent.” St. Paul was sent by the same Jesus who sent St. Peter: but the latter was sent by a command from his Lord in person; the former by a command from heaven.



rich and powerful provinces of the Roman empire, which extended from the Euphrates, westward to the Ionian Sea, were the principal scenes of his zeal and piety <sup>1</sup>.

It pleased God, that in him should be manifested the full power of divine grace. Born a Jew, trained in the strictest discipline of the Pharisees, deeply read in the writings of the Old Testament, well versed in the tradition of the elders, and of a character—ardent in feeling, overbearing in zeal, impetuous in action—he brooked not that his brethren, the Jews, should forsake the faith of their fathers. He therefore stood conspicuous as a persecutor of the rising Church of Christ in the city of Damascus. But “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out <sup>2</sup>!” He who left Jerusalem “breathing out threatenings and slaughters against the disciples of the Lord,” and had journeyed five days towards Damascus, urged on by the desire of executing his threats, was constrained to enter that city as a follower of the very Jesus whom he had resolved to persecute <sup>3</sup>. “Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further,” stays alike “the fury of the waves, and the madness of the people.” As he came near to the city, a light from heaven shone round about, which struck him to the earth, and a divine voice arrested him with the powerful appeal, “*Why* persecutest thou me?” Trembling

<sup>1</sup> This circumstance, considered as a secondary cause, may account for the historical fact, that within these limits, during the two first centuries, the most considerable body of Christians was contained.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. xi. 33.

<sup>3</sup> Acts ix. 1.

and amazed, he confessed a present God. He was converted. His purpose was instantly changed. The enemy of the cross became its defender; and the persecutor, Saul of Jerusalem, was at last the martyr, Paul of Rome.

His conversion was not less remarkable in its effect, than it had been signal in its means. His purpose was changed, but not his lofty character. In the *Apostle* we mark the same unabated zeal, the same unwearied activity, the same intensity of feeling, which distinguished the haughty *Pharisee*; but directed to the honour of the cross of Christ. The Cross was henceforth his glory<sup>1</sup>. To establish

<sup>1</sup> Gal. vi. 14. "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." And again Gal. ii. 20. "I am crucified with Christ."

These strong expressions of the Apostle are to be understood with reference to the explanation which our blessed Lord has condescended to give of the duty they represent. "Then said Jesus unto his disciples, if any man will come after me, let him *deny himself*, and *take up his cross*, and follow me." Matth. xvi. 24. So that to be "crucified with Christ," is to "deny ourselves" in whatever is contrary to the commands of Christ; and to "glory in the cross of Christ," is to delight in such denial, because we delight to do *his* will and *not* our own. *Self-denial* therefore is the Christian's cross.

Nor is this expression too strong, as indicating the painful struggles of the soul in its resistance of evil. To be strenuous in the performance of outward duties—to exercise benevolence, in relieving the distressed, giving bread to the hungry and clothing to the naked; to be diligent in our worldly calling, and ardent in the pursuit of "whatever things are lovely, whatever things are honest, whatever things are of good report"—These things, though part of our bounden duty to God and to man, and therefore not to be neglected, yet require a degree of activity which is naturally gratifying to the

its doctrines, he traversed sea and land: in journeyings often, his toils subdued him not; in perils in the sea, his heart fainted not<sup>1</sup>; “in hunger and “thirst, in cold and nakedness,” his faith failed him not. He had in view *one great object*, and he attained it—he preached the Gospel to the nations.

To fit him for this great work, he was under the influence of immediate inspiration, and endued with

human heart, and carry with them that well-earned meed of praise from the good and honourable, which the noblest spirits feel most deeply. Besides, men naturally delight in action: like St. Peter, they find it more easy to draw the sword and fight the battle of the Lord, than, for his sake, meekly to bear the scorn of others; or resolutely to resist the evil of their own hearts. Whereas, to practise those graces and virtues, to which God and ourselves only are conscious—not to gratify the infirmity of pride by complaint in seasons of distress; *not* to satisfy the feelings of revenge; *not* to pursue pleasures which invite; *not* to love the world when our course in it is unruffled by disappointment; “*not* to seek our own;” and, for the Gospel’s sake, *not* to allow ourselves even in what is lawful, lest we cause a weak brother to offend—*Thus* continually and watchfully *to deny ourselves*, is a harder task, and oftentimes requires a sterner courage, than to meet the pains of martyrdom. Many who refuse to bear the weight of the cross, would not refuse to die upon it.

But God, who rarely calls the martyr to the stake, daily and hourly calls men to deny themselves. Self-denial therefore is the daily duty of every one of us; and the practice of it is the very condition of our union with Christ; *If* any man will come after me, let “him “*deny himself*.” Mark then a faithful follower of the Saviour! he bears indignity with patience, because Christ bore to be reviled, yet reviled not again—he bears with meekness the scornful looks of the proud, because Christ was mocked and spitted upon, yet opened not his mouth—he denies himself in all ungodliness, because he would “purify himself even as *He* is pure” whom he professes to follow—nor does he allow himself in any thing which the pure law of Christ teaches him to deny. Thus St. Paul bore *his* cross—Thus “the “world was crucified unto him, and he unto the world.”

<sup>1</sup> Acts xxvii. 22.

the power of working miracles. He was also, in himself, particularly qualified for this office. To a natural dignity of mind, and a commanding eloquence, he added great attainments. He was deeply learned; and thereby enabled to cope with the learning of his own countrymen, and the philosophy of the Gentiles. All his powers were well directed. He knew all the springs of human action, and touched them with a master's skill. Hence there is a remarkable adaptation of sentiment, style, and manner, to the different people, or individuals, amongst whom he ministered<sup>1</sup>. To the lawless sailors in the storm, he declared at once his call to be divine<sup>2</sup>. Before the Athenians, who were of elegant minds, smooth manners, and a keen sensibility of any opposition to their national, or devotional prejudices—before *them* he studiously avoided an abrupt declaration of his call from heaven. He declared to them *no new* God; but proposed to open their understandings to a fuller comprehension of the very Being whom they *did* worship. His address to them, upon seeing their altar dedicated “to the Unknown”—is the finest instance on record, of the application of eloquence to the honour of God<sup>3</sup>. Indeed, he exhibited in his conduct before all men, a rare combination of different excellencies. Unyielding in principle, he was yet of most finished address, and polished manners<sup>4</sup>. The self-respect which set him

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. ix. 22.

<sup>2</sup> Acts xxvii. 23.

<sup>3</sup> Acts xvii. 22.

<sup>4</sup> Of the truth of this observation, his reply to king Agrippa is a remarkable proof. Acts xxvi. 28, 29. “Then Agrippa said unto Paul, almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian. And Paul said, I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me

at ease before kings, was tempered with a humility, which made him courteous towards all men. To a high and spirited resistance of oppression, was added an unreserved submission to the laws. Did he unwittingly fall into error? the most humble mind could not shew a greater promptness to atone for it. Thus his bold bearing of himself before the haughty Ananias was followed by immediate self-reproach, upon being reminded of the sacred office of him, whom he reproved: "I wist not, brethren, that he " was the high priest: for it is written, thou shalt " not speak evil of the ruler of thy people<sup>1</sup>." So keen a sense of honour actuated him, that he refused liberty for himself and his companions in captivity, rather than accept it to the destruction of a fellow-creature. "Do thyself no harm" said the Christian captive to the despairing keeper, "for we are all " here." What other language could the nicest honour dictate?—"Our chains are loosed, but a Chris- " tian's love of his neighbour, is a firmer bond than " links of iron: rather than thou shouldst suffer by " our escape, we are thy prisoners still<sup>2</sup>." The keeper of the prison *believed*, as well he might—He and all his house. He believed that God was with his prisoners: that as nothing but a miracle could have shaken the foundation of the prison, opened

" this day, were both almost and altogether such as I am, *except these bonds*." It is impossible to imagine an address combining, in a greater degree, proper self-respect in the speaker, with the most engaging courtesy towards those whom he addressed. How nobly are we thus instructed to blend the sincerity of truth, with the winning influence of a kind address!

<sup>1</sup> Acts xxiii. 3, 5.

<sup>2</sup> Acts xvi. 23, 28.



the doors, and loosed the bands; so that the Being, whom the captives served, and who had miraculously afforded them the opportunity of escape, must be the only God.

Such was the Apostle of the Gentiles: powerful in his eloquence; still more powerful in his example. And it pleased God, by his “preaching, to cause “the light of the Gospel to shine throughout the “world.”

Shall, then, he have preached in vain for us? God forbid! Whether we be ministers or hearers of the word, let us profit by his example. Are we stewards of God's mysteries? the firmness of the Apostle under all his various trials, should lead us to compromise neither our own faithfulness, nor the honour of God, either from the fear or love of men. Are we hearers of the word? let us imitate his zeal in practising what we believe; neither omitting what is right to be done, nor doing what the word forbids to be done; lest, “having tasted the good “word of God, we fall away, crucify the Son of “God afresh<sup>1</sup>,” and the awful reproof to Saul, be applicable to *us*, “It is Jesus whom thou persecutest.” Rather, let us remember, that, “not “every one which saith, Lord, Lord, shall enter “into the kingdom of heaven; but he that *doeth the “Will* of the Father which is in heaven<sup>2</sup>.” Let us remember that Jesus Christ became “the author of “eternal salvation unto all”—*not indiscriminately*, but—“unto all them that *obey* him<sup>3</sup>.” Pray we then, in the words of this Collect, “that we having “the wonderful conversion of the Apostle Paul in

<sup>1</sup> Heb. vi. 5, 6.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. vii. 21.

<sup>3</sup> Heb. v. 9.

“ remembrance, may shew forth our thankfulness for  
 “ the same, by following the holy doctrine which he  
 “ taught.” Thus believing, thus acting, we may  
 hope to be sustained in our course, by the same spirit  
 of light and life, which animated *Him*; we also  
 may run our race with endurance, and finish our  
 course with joy; through Jesus Christ our Lord.



## 71. THE PURIFICATION OF MARY THE VIRGIN.

*ALMIGHTY and everlasting God, we humbly beseech thy Majesty, that as thy only begotten Son was this day presented in the temple in substance of our flesh; so we may be presented unto thee with pure and clean hearts, by the same thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

THE mother of Jesus was desirous, as well on her own account, as on that of her new-born Son, to fulfil every part of the ceremonial law<sup>1</sup>. Accordingly, on the fortieth day from his birth, she carried him to the temple, for the twofold purpose of presenting him before the Lord, as her first-born Son, and of offering her own oblation upon her purification.

“ In sorrow shalt thou bring forth children<sup>2</sup>” was the appointed penalty of sin. It is therefore a most reasonable duty, that there be some marked obser-

<sup>1</sup> See the comment upon the Collect for the Circumcision.

<sup>2</sup> Gen. iii. 16.

vance of grateful thanksgiving, when the penalty is so far mitigated, that the mother weeps no more "for joy that a man is born into the world<sup>1</sup>." In the Jewish Church this observance was known under the title of "the purification<sup>2</sup>:" it is continued in our Church under the title of "Churching of Women." As this office was originally of divine appointment, so is it wisely continued. Surely if the heart be ever susceptible of religious impressions, it must be whilst the happy mother has fresh in her recollection the mercy which sustained her "in the great pain and peril of child-birth:" "when the snares of death compassed her, and the pains of hell gat hold upon her;" when she vowed, for her deliverance, to "receive the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord!" How gratefully! how sincerely! let us hope, must she pay those vows unto the Lord, "in the courts of the Lord's house, in the presence of all his people, even in the midst of thee, O Jerusalem<sup>3</sup>!" Indeed, few circumstances occur to us of more affecting interest, than the public thanksgiving of a mother, upon restoration to safety and health, after all her hours of peril in child-birth. She joins again the assembled congregation, as one recalled from the borders of

<sup>1</sup> John xvi. 21.

<sup>2</sup> In the purification, under the law, the Priests sprinkled blood upon the mother in the court of the temple, and received from her an offering proportioned to her situation in life. The parents of our Saviour, being poor, brought as their offering a pair of turtle doves, or two young pigeons.

<sup>3</sup> Read the 116 Psalm, which is introduced with particular propriety as part of the service for the Churching of Women.

the grave. She has experienced the awful feelings which agitate the soul when it draws near to death and judgment; and remembering the vow she then vowed unto the Lord, justly considers what remains of life, as dedicated to *Him* who preserved it<sup>1</sup>.

It is principally, however, with a view of commemorating our blessed Lord's presentation in the temple, that this day is now kept holy. Thus when we pray for spiritual purity in ourselves, the Collect reminds us, that none can "present us with pure" and clean hearts before God, except the same "Jesus Christ our Lord." But though the blood of his sacrifice alone cleanseth and purifieth the heart, we must comply with the *conditions* upon which an interest in the sacrifice is offered to us; we must take the *means* of grace supplied to us. If *he*, who

<sup>1</sup> Thou, who art a mother, "keep these things in thine heart," and learn from them wisdom to meet, with Christian consistency, whatever changes and chances may await thee in this varying scene of life. Art thou moving in a course of vanity—a lover of the world? Pause for a moment! Remember how utterly you disregarded that world and its vanities; how insufficient you found them to give you a moment's peace—when most you needed it—in the season of your dismay! Your thoughts *then* were, "what must I do to be saved?" You then vowed to God, "faithfully to live" and walk according to his will in this life present:" and you then resolved to consider the one thing needful to be—the being "partaker of everlasting glory in the *life to come*." Put into practice *now*, thy good resolutions *then*. Perhaps, Care is thy portion: sickness and sorrow overwhelm thee. Remember the days of old—meditate upon past deliverances, and consider them as a rich earnest of present help. In the spirit of faith assure thyself with David; "I will remember the years of the right hand of the most Highest. I will remember the works of the Lord, and call to mind thy wonders of *old time*. I will think also of all thy works, "and my talking shall be of thy doings." Psalm lxxvii. 10—12.

knew no sin, and in whose mouth was found no guile—if *he*, who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, and was therefore free from the touch of human frailty—if *he*, who was the beloved Son of God, would not omit one of the prescribed ordinances of religion; it were folly and wickedness in us, to suppose that *we*—born in sin, and even when regenerate requiring daily to be renewed by the Holy Spirit<sup>1</sup>—can continue either stedfast to the duties of our new birth, or safe in the enjoyment of its privileges, unless we diligently apply ourselves to the several means of grace now appointed for us. If Jesus Christ, “though he were a son, yet learned *obedience*,” that “*thereby* he might be made perfect<sup>2</sup>,” he is the wise Christian who does likewise—who trusts for salvation only to Christ, yet follows the commandments of God with a steady and cheerful obedience.

If, therefore, your prayer be sincere—if you *wish* to “be presented unto God with pure and clean hearts, by Jesus Christ” in the temple not made with hands, you will never fail in all holy exercises. You will search the Scriptures, wherein ye think ye have eternal life—you will be instant in prayer for the grace which alone “sanctifieth you, and all the elect people of God”—you will never neglect a holy observance of the Lord’s day; since it was God, and not man, who spake and said, “remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy”—you will not be of the number of those, who forsake the assembling themselves together in the house of the

<sup>1</sup> See the comment upon the Collect for Christmas-day.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. v. 8, 9.



Lord; but you will bear in mind the glorious promise to the congregation of the faithful,—“where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.” Neither will you abstain from attending at the Lord’s table. The ordinance is not of human, but of *divine* institution. An *observance* of it is encouraged by the glorious assurance of the Son of God, “Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day<sup>1</sup>.” How far a *wilful neglect* of it casts off blessing, every man may judge for himself from our Saviour’s indignant warning, “Verily, Verily, I say unto you, *except* ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you<sup>2</sup>.”

<sup>1</sup> John vi. 54.

<sup>2</sup> John vi. 53. Among the various inconsistencies which mark the human mind, this is not the least, that what every professing Christian thinks necessary to be done at some period of his life, should by many be delayed till the last stage of it. As this is too true with respect to the care of the soul in general, so it is conspicuously true as it affects men in regard to their observance of the Holy Communion—a means of grace for strengthening and refreshing the soul. Yet to partake of the Holy Communion is by every reflecting Christian, considered so bounden a duty, that many who neglect it, are so far from professing to think the observance of it unimportant, that they allege their own unworthiness as a reason for their neglect, and flatter themselves that they are excusable before God, by the humility which they shew in *thinking themselves not good enough*. It is impossible to imagine more vain and delusive reasoning. *Pride*, not humility, is the spring of such excuses. The plain question at once suggests itself—“Why not become what you think good enough?” Are you safe, living “not good enough,” merely because you do not take the sacrament? Is it safe for any man, *not* to commemorate *his* “meritorious cross and passion,” by whom alone, *that* which is not good enough, can be pardoned; and *that* which is unworthy, rendered acceptable? Is a man who is sick,

On these points of religious duty we cannot be too regular: the strict conformity of our blessed Lord to outward ordinances, is a plain example to ourselves. From his birth in the manger, to his ascent into heaven, He fulfilled *all* the law. A few days after his birth, he yielded to the ordinance of circumcision; and within a few hours of his arraignment, he observed the ordinance of the passover. He constantly studied the word of God. He was instant in prayer, both public and private: and regularly “remembered the Sabbath, to keep it holy;” frequenting the Synagogues, and hearing and reading the word of God. Let *us* go, and do likewise. And though our best services must ever be unworthy, and our most strenuous endeavours be imperfect, we must encourage ourselves to perseverance, by the

safer by abstaining from the only remedy for his sickness? Or is it not, that you are unwilling to part with the sin which you cherish in your heart, and the consciousness of which tells you that you are unfit for the presence of God?—Beware—for thy soul’s sake! To live in *wilful* sin, is to live, *never safe*. You are very much afraid of offending God, by coming to the sacrament unworthily; but you are not afraid of offending him by keeping away from *his holy* presence, and continuing in *your own unholy* ways! Oh! the mockery of this fancied humility! this *pretended* regard to the honour of God! when it is clear that you regard only yourself. If sin keeps you from God—cast off sin. *Then*, you are worthy to come, as a penitent. *Then*, you are worthy to return, as a weeping Peter, to the Master whom you have forsaken. *Then*, your fear will rightly influence you. You will fear any longer wilfully, openly, to live in disobedience to a positive divine command—you will fear to put off repentance and obedience till some more convenient season—you will fear to arrogate to yourself the seeming power of assuring length of days, and so “tempting the Lord thy God.” Obedience, if not sincere, doubtless fails of blessing. *True*. But *Disobedience*, if wilful and persevered in, *can never fail of Punishment*. Then, “turn ye, turn ye; why will ye die?”

declaration of our heavenly Father, that "his strength is made perfect in weakness<sup>1</sup>." His spirit sanctifieth even the humblest endeavours of the penitent. If a man be not wanting to himself, let him have good hope; for God will not fail him. "Is not our God, the God of salvation<sup>2</sup>?" Have we not on record his last word of promise—"Lo! I am with you *alway*, even unto the end of the world!" "Amen<sup>3</sup>."



## 72. ST. MATTHIAS' DAY.



Of the life of Matthias, but little is known. He was early a follower of Christ; though it is by no means certain, as some have supposed, that he was one of the seventy disciples. That he was well qualified for his office, we may be sure, or the eleven Apostles would not have proposed him as a fit fellow-labourer with themselves in preaching the Gospel. After ministering for some time in Judea, he travelled eastward, and suffered martyrdom in the year 61 or 64.



*O ALMIGHTY God, who, into the place of the traitor Judas, didst choose thy faithful servant Matthias to be of the number of the twelve Apostles; Grant that thy Church, being always preserved from false Apostles, may be ordered and guided by faithful and true Pastors, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

WE this day commemorate the appointment of Matthias, to "take part of the ministry and apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell<sup>4</sup>."

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. xii. 9.

<sup>2</sup> Psalm lxviii. 20.

<sup>3</sup> Matth. xxviii. 20.

<sup>4</sup> Acts. i. 25.

The occasion is very instructive. In Judas, we have an awful warning, that the highest spiritual privileges cannot save the impenitent. In the conduct of the eleven Apostles, we have a glorious example of faith, triumphing over every discouragement, and “enduring, as seeing him who is “invisible<sup>1</sup>.”

Warned by Judas, what servant of Christ shall dare to hold himself so secure of divine mercy, that he cannot fall? Is he elect—chosen? so *once* was Judas; chosen by the Redeemer, to hear his discourses, to witness the miracles by which they were accompanied, to share the power by which they were performed, and to exercise the ministry of his word. But Judas loved the creature more than the Creator, and fatally verified the saying of St. Paul; “Covetousness is Idolatry.” Lured by the covenanted reward of thirty pieces of silver, he gave up to death, the Lord of life—his companion, his counsellor, his friend—and chose the sign of friendly salutation as the signal of betrayal. See the awful power of *premeditated* sin! It steels a man against every good impression of the Spirit. Judas *cherished* sin in his heart, which then became an unfit temple for holy thoughts to dwell in. He became hardened; insensible alike to the fear of God, and the love of man. He compassed the death of his friend with the sharpest cunning, and most wary prudence, whilst the whole scheme was veiled under the closest hypocrisy; “Whom I shall kiss, that same is he.” The victim was seized, and the traitor was paid the

<sup>1</sup> Heb. xi. 27.

price of his treason ; but “ the wages of sin is death.” Short to Judas was the enjoyment of his recompence. The price of blood soon called for vengeance : horror, remorse, and despair overtook the faithless servant—the fallen friend—the betrayer of innocent blood. He could not bear to have in his possession the reward which in prospect he had prized so highly. He offered to return it to the Chief Priests and Elders ; but his offer was rejected with scorn. In vain he pleaded his remorse—in vain he urged that the victim of his accusation was innocent. The deed could not be undone. “ What “ is that to us”—retorted the malignant purchasers of blood—“ What is that to *us*? see *thou* to that<sup>1</sup>.” Anger and dismay then overpowering him, he threw

<sup>1</sup> The bitterness of the taunt—“ What is that to *us*, see *thou* to “ that”—is experienced by every one, who having burthened his conscience for the lust of the eye, or the pride of life, or any unlawful gain or pleasure, and finding disappointment to be the only fruit of sin, endeavours to palliate by excuses, what admits not of palliation ; and lays to the charge of the tempter, what in its consequences must still be borne by the offender. Wicked spirits, like wicked mortals, rejoice in deluding men to be as wicked as themselves, and then mock their misery. The remorse of a wounded conscience is met by them, only with the cruel retort—“ What to *us* thy compunction ! What thy complaints of disappointment ! See *thou* to “ that.” One only refuge is left to the wounded conscience—*that* refuge, *God*. The world is all insufficient ; and self-righteousness does but fester the wound. Thus taught that each sinner is answerable for his own sin ; and that the tempter, though he may share both the guilt and the punishment, neither lessens the one, nor extenuates the other to ourselves ; earnestly let us pray of God, to grant us true repentance for the past, and his holy Spirit for the time to come, that the rest of our life hereafter may be pure and holy, as becometh those who profess themselves “ members of Christ, “ children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven.”



down the pieces of silver in the temple, and went and hanged himself. The betrayer of his Master, became the murderer of himself.

Thus "sin lieth at the door<sup>1</sup>." There it may sleep for a while; but when, like the waking serpent, it rises from its torpor, O! how deadly is its sting! To the torment of its fury let Judas bear witness. Witness also *every one* who *wilfully* runs into guilt. If conscience sleep for a season, it awakens with renewed strength, and wounds with sharper venom. If thus far you have fallen, like Judas, from your faithfulness; arise, lest you fall for ever! The hand which "raiseth up them that fall<sup>2</sup>" is stretched out to raise up *you*. "Turn ye, turn ye from your evil way; why *will* ye die?" Turn to Him, who died for sinners! Pray against "presumptuous sins, lest "they get the dominion over you." Mourn your past offences against Him, who now, as ever, speaketh pardon to the penitent, peace to the contrite, hope to the despairing; "If we confess our sins, "God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and "to cleanse us from all unrighteousness<sup>3</sup>."

But though one of the Apostles of Christ fell from his election, we find that the Church of Christ fell not. Founded upon a rock, it hath even till now

<sup>1</sup> Gen. iv. 7. When the Lord condescended to plead with Cain, "Why art thou so wrath? and why is thy countenance fallen?" He plainly shewed him, that his *wickedness* was the cause of his *misery*. "If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if "thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door"—lieth like an angry monitor, allowing the sinner no rest in his going out and coming in; but with clamorous importunity, for ever reminding him, that "there is no peace to the wicked."

<sup>2</sup> See the Litany.

<sup>3</sup> 1 John i. 9.

stood, and for ever will stand, firm in its strength—its doctrines not less pure, its precepts not less excellent, its ordinances not less holy, nor their consolations less powerful, however of those who *administer* them, some may at times disgrace their high calling; and of those who *partake* of them, some fall away from their stedfastness<sup>1</sup>. The ark

<sup>1</sup> The reader may refer to the comment upon the Thursday before Easter; and to a note in page 141; where he will see stated the distinctive characters of the sin of Peter, and Judas. He will also there find some observations illustrative of the doctrine here laid down, in defence of the Church of Christ and her administration of ordinances, even under circumstances which *appear* to weaken alike *their* influence and *her* authority.

I cannot, however, but observe, how admirably our Church, when she would have *all* men come unto her ordinances, avoids equally uncharitableness towards man, and disregard to the honour of God. In her call to the holy sacrament for instance, she thus states the conditions on which her sons are to be admitted to that ordinance—“ye then that do truly and earnestly repent you of your sins, and “are in love and charity with your neighbours, and intend to lead a “*new* life; following the commandments of God, and walking from “henceforth in his holy ways—draw near with faith.” By this plain statement of the requisites in a communicant, the honour of God is upheld. Nor is charity to man less respected. The Church does *not* presume to judge the *hearts* of the comers to the holy communion. She supposes, and very properly supposes, that after her solemn declaration of the repentance, faith, and obedience required in communicants, none approach who do not tacitly confess themselves penitent for the past, and faithfully resolved for the future. Wherefore if among worshippers in general, and even among communicants, some may with their lips hail Jesus as Master, and spiritually betray him, by cherishing evil in their hearts—the sin rests with the offenders. It weakens not the benefit of the ordinance to the truly contrite and humble communicant; to *him* it is “the “strengthening and refreshing of his soul,” amid the changes and chances of his mortal life: he rejoices in its efficacy, and trusts that so strengthened he may, as the penitent Peter, endure unto the end,

is holy, and itself remains in unsullied purity, even when touched by unholy hands. Accordingly, when Judas fell, the eleven Apostles proceeded to fill up his place in the Church; for they were convinced that the religion of Christ had lost nothing of its divine authority, or blessedness. They themselves appointed two men, as equally fitted for the Apostleship. Willing however to be guided in so weighty a decision, by a higher than human discernment, they prayed that *God* "would shew whether of the two *He* had chosen." "The lot fell upon Matthias: and he was numbered with the eleven Apostles<sup>1</sup>."

It may happen, now, as aforetime, that in the Church—the chosen family of Christ—some may act a traitor's part; and, Judas like, betray the Master to whom they offer tokens of their love. An outward worshipper may bear a faithless heart. Suppose this dreadful hypocrisy sometimes to exist, it affords no grounds of apprehension to a faithful minister, or a faithful people. It rather urges upon

and, through the all-sufficient sacrifice of Christ, receive at last his crown.

<sup>1</sup> Acts i. 24 and 26. The mode of proceeding adopted by the Apostles, was not at that time presumptuous. It was the only mode indeed in which they could shew that they acted under a deep sense of dependance upon God. Their counsellor—the Lord Jesus—to whom they had been used to apply on every occasion of difficulty, was gone from them; and his successor—the Holy Ghost, the Comforter—was not yet given. Anxious, therefore, that their choice should be sanctioned by a decision from above, they cast their lots into an urn; and after long and fervent prayer, took thence the name of Matthias, as the chosen of the Lord.

them, more forcibly, the necessity of offering up with increased earnestness, and enlarged piety, the beautiful prayer of this Collect, that "Almighty God"—He, who alone can govern the *hearts* of men—would "grant that his Church, being always preserved from false Apostles, may be ordered and "guided by *faithful* and *true* pastors." Nor let the congregation of the faithful fear. Jehovah, who preserved his Church, when it pastured, a little flock, on the hills of Judah, will even now feed them, among all lands, in green pastures; and lead them beside the waters of comfort<sup>1</sup>. Is he not himself the good shepherd? Did he not lay down his life for the sheep, that the wolf should no more spoil them, neither the enemy do them violence? Fear ye not then! God will still "feed his flock, like a "shepherd," still watch them with a shepherd's care, and for his name and honour's sake gather them at last to his heavenly fold; where, in safety and in rest, they shall feed by the waters of life, and be for ever his glory, and his care.

<sup>1</sup> Ezekiel xxxiv. 15, 16.

### 73. ANNUNCIATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY<sup>1</sup>.

*WE beseech thee, O Lord, pour thy grace into our hearts; that as we have known the incarnation of thy Son Jesus Christ by the message of an angel; so by his cross and passion we may be brought unto the glory of his resurrection, through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

WHEN the time was now at hand, that the promised Messiah should appear as man, an angel announced to Mary, that she should miraculously be the mother of the incarnate God. This annunciation is commemorated by our Church with due observance. In the Collect for the day we are led to consider also the adorable mysteries consequent upon the event itself, and are directed to pray, “that as we have known the *Incarnation* of Jesus Christ, by the message of an angel; so by his cross and passion, we may be brought unto the glory of his *Resurrection*.”

The character of Mary, the mother of our Lord, appears, from what little is recorded of her, to have been one of great simplicity. We find her inclined

<sup>1</sup> The name—Mary—means excellent, as does also the name—Miriam: and as Moses was a type of Christ, so Miriam, the sister of Moses, was a type of Mary; each of them being instrumental in redeeming the people of God from their captivity. God, speaking of the redemption of Israel “out of the house of servants,” adds—“I sent before thee Moses, Aaron, and Miriam.” Micah vi. 4.



rather to holy meditation, than to any vehement expression of her faith, or anxious display of her piety. Devout without ostentation, believing yet not credulous, faithful yet not presumptuous, she "*pondered*" "*in her heart*" all things which she heard relative to the divine mission of her son, whom she delighted to train up as a child of God. Accordingly we see Jesus, in his infancy, conforming, under her direction and care, to the whole divine law. As he grew in years, he grew in grace ; studying the word, keeping the Sabbath, and observing the ordinances. His mother in the mean time kept on her even course of religious and social duties ; happy in the favour of heaven, and the growth of truth and grace in the heart and conduct of her child. Her character is beautifully presented to us by the Apostle, in his portrait of a Christian mother—one, who "loves her husband, loves her children, is discreet, chaste, a keeper at home<sup>1</sup>;" wishing to be conspicuous for no brighter ornament, than the "ornament of a *meek*" "and *quiet* spirit," which she rejoices to know "is "*in the sight of God, of great price*<sup>2</sup>." Such a

<sup>1</sup> Tit. ii. 5.

<sup>2</sup> In tracing to their source the several causes of either peace or disquiet which affect domestic life, we shall find not a few to take their rise in the conduct of the wife and mother. "The contentions "of a wife are a continual dropping"—undermining the best founded hope of domestic peace ; and by division, causing the house to fall. But if the wife be of "a meek and quiet spirit ;" "loving her husband, loving her children ;" Tit. ii. 4. Her very name is blessing. Her house standeth in honour, for there are no divisions to weaken it ; no contention for superiority. As Christ is the head of the Church, so the husband is looked up to, without cavil, as the head of his family : and all is ordered well.

Parents would do well, *early* to instill into the minds of their

mother, whether her station be high or low, her employment exalted or homely, her knowledge extensive or confined, is nevertheless blessed: nay, she is more blessed than even the mother of Jesus. "Blessed art thou amongst women<sup>1</sup>," was the salutation of the angel to Mary: "yea rather," saith the Lord of angels in reference to the mother who bare him, "Blessed are they that hear the word and keep it<sup>2</sup>."

In contemplating the *Incarnation* of the Son of God, we are lost in mingled feelings of wonder and

daughters this view of female duty: lest in training them to shine in the *world*, by a display of worldly advantages, they neglect to train them for the exercise of Christian graces—self-denial, meekness, and humility—in the less dazzling, though more important sphere of *home*.

The truly Christian wife is "in all quietness, sobriety, and peace," a "follower of holy and godly matrons." Her praise is not of men only, but of God; and for *her* there is sure reward, here and hereafter—*here*, in the serenity of conscious rectitude, and the happy conviction that she is a blessing to others; and *hereafter*, in the approval of that "meek and lowly Jesus," who in holding up to our imitation his own example of humility, has encouraged us with the hope, that they who are the lowliest here, *may be* amongst the highest in the kingdom of heaven.

This subject—always of high moment, and well deserving the grave consideration of every parent—is becoming daily more and more important in this great Christian land: because from the general diffusion of knowledge among our countrywomen, their influence is daily more and more powerful; and each individual brings either happiness or misery to the husband who has entrusted to her his welfare, and to the family, who look to her example for their own guidance, in proportion as she either puts on, or lays aside that "ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which even in the sight of God, is of great price," and which, in the dearest relation of social life, is *beyond all price*; for it soothes every care, sweetens every enjoyment, reconciles to every loss, and next to the favour of God, is the unfailing source to man, of peace, serenity, and joy.

<sup>1</sup> Luke i. 28.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. xi. 28.

gratitude. Voluntarily to exchange a throne in heaven for the manger in Bethlehem; to leave the Father, and dwell among sinners; to lay aside happiness, and honour, and glory, and to accept in exchange, sorrow and contempt, and death—argues counsel so deep, a scheme of mercy so vast, that the mind cannot grasp it; the imagination cannot comprehend it. But our wonder expands into gratitude when we reflect that all this counsel was established for *our* sake. The incarnate God did humble himself, in order that in his humiliation he might become a perfect and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for sin: that there might be “no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk *not* after the *flesh*, but after the *Spirit*<sup>1</sup>.” “Sing, therefore O ye heavens, for the Lord hath done it; break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every tree therein: for the Lord hath re-deemed Jacob!” “The Lord hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of *all* the nations, and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God<sup>2</sup>.”

Would we be grateful? let us give the desired proof of our gratitude; even a holy obedience<sup>3</sup>. What though the mocked and dying Jesus be the scorn of men; despised and forsaken! the same is He, who hath risen to glory; the almighty God, “the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.” Our part therefore is, to keep his commandments, and to bear in mind “the glory of his *Resurrection*.” Hav-

<sup>1</sup> Rom. viii. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Isaiah xliv. 23, and lii. 10.

<sup>3</sup> John xiv. 15. “If ye love me, keep my commandments.”

ing risen again, the conqueror of death and the grave, He is now the Lord of life. If any man will follow him to that glory, "Let him," saith He, "*take up his cross* and follow me<sup>1</sup>." The cross then—which was to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness—should it not be to us our joy and glory? And are we not well instructed by this Collect, that only "by his cross" and passion, we may hope to be brought unto the "glories of his resurrection?" Glorious indeed will be that day! when the hour of death—the hour of darkness and of gloominess, of clouds and of thick darkness, like the morning spread upon the mountains—when that hour shall have passed away, as the dew before the sun, what new scenes will open to our view!—a new world enlightened by the sun of righteousness in his glory!—a world of spirits, whose every power will be immeasurably extended, every faculty expanded, and every sense quickened—when the impenitent wicked will be capable of enduring for ever the gnawings of the worm that dieth not; and the faithful rendered capable of enjoying a happiness, which, like its Author, will be without end or change!

<sup>1</sup> Matth. xvi. 24. See a Note, page 364, in explanation of this passage.

## 74. ST. MARK'S DAY.

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ST. MARK was not one of the Apostles, and it is uncertain whether he was one of the disciples of Jesus. Being, however, converted from Judaism by St. Peter, he travelled, and passed much of his time with that Apostle, whom he considered in the light of a spiritual Father, and from whom he learned the various particulars of the life and death, resurrection and ascension of the Son of God. A knowledge of these particulars, imparted by such authority, eminently qualified him to write the history which he has left us, under the title of "the Gospel of St. Mark."

The exact time when he wrote his Gospel is uncertain ; probably about the year 65.

Some authors speak of him as having died a martyr. But the general tenor of history respecting him is so vague as to the kind and place of his supposed martyrdom, that we may more probably conclude him to have suffered, as other Christians, much persecution, and at last to have died without violence : though the time of his death is not known.

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*O ALMIGHTY God, who hast instructed thy holy Church with the heavenly doctrine of thy Evangelist St. Mark ; give us grace, that being not like children carried away with every blast of vain doctrine, we may be established in the truth of thy holy Gospel, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

THE Gospel of St. Mark was written for the Christians at Rome. The converts there naturally wished to possess a record of the most important passages in the Saviour's life ; and as the account



which they had received of the Messiah had been chiefly from the preaching of Peter, they could expect no more faithful historian than Mark, who had long been that Apostle's chosen disciple, companion, and friend. Moreover, what Mark wrote, St. Peter saw, approved, and sanctioned; and what St. Peter approved, we receive as the words of inspiration. For what is *confirmed* as true by an Apostle, though not written by an Apostle, has all the weight of apostolic authority, and sufficiently proves the record to have been made under the directing influence of the Spirit of God. Our Collect therefore speaks of the Gospel of St. Mark as "*heavenly doctrine*," and considers Almighty God as thereby "*instructing his holy Church*."

But in vain has this heavenly doctrine been revealed to us—in vain, this instruction been appointed—unless for ourselves, individually, we accept it; heed the instruction it gives; and gain such a measure of grace, "that being not like children carried away with every blast of vain doctrine, we be *established* in the truth."

None attain this happy steadfastness in religion, without deep humiliation, strong faith, and diligent labour. None continue therein, without perpetual self-control, unwearied exertion, and unceasing watchfulness. But this labour is vain, unless we guard against the false doctrines of men, who, like Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, choose to consider themselves as ministers of the word, uncalled by due authority; and who, proceeding to the awful duties of the ministry upon a self-constituted commission, would withdraw us from the form of sound

words, and entangle us in all the confusion and sadness, which attend upon an unhallowed enquiry into the high things of God. The Almighty has chosen to forward his own gracious scheme of salvation, by the intermediate ministry of men, thereto apostolically ordained. Who shall dare question *His* counsels<sup>1</sup>? But the evil influence of such self-appointed teachers could be little, if those against whom they direct their efforts, had not in their heart some secret pride, which the false doctrine cherishes, some hidden fears which it allays, some vain hopes which it encourages. The danger is from yourselves. You are then only *irresistibly* “carried away by vain doctrine,” when you proudly oppose your own view of religious duty, to the plain statement of duty laid down in the Gospel; when you encourage yourselves with vain hopes, and yield to vain fears—when you either fear that God cannot pardon the contrite in his penitence, or hope that he will pardon the wicked in his sin.

<sup>1</sup> Numbers xvi. 3. to 33. The sin of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, was the sin of *presumption*. Because all Israel were the chosen people of the Lord, these men could not endure that any peculiar regard should be shewn to the preaching of the appointed priests of the word, even though God himself had appointed the family of Aaron to the priesthood. They argued, that since “*all* the congregation were holy, and the Lord among them;” the ordained priests “took too much” upon themselves, when they declared their commission, as with authority, and preached holiness, as ambassadors of heaven. 2 Cor. v. 20. Eph. vi. 20. But the Almighty punished their presumption in a manner the most signally dreadful, that all men might know God to be the Lord, who not only “will have mercy upon whom he will have mercy” of his own free grace and favour, but who will convey that mercy according to his own good pleasure, and will often choose, as his instruments of good, the

Yet, how many delude themselves with this *vain hope*! How readily do they listen to false teachers, who keep up the delusion. The evil of the tempter is too welcome to the evil heart of the sinner. Grievous, therefore, as is the curse to a people, when false prophets "heal the hurt of God's people slightly, " saying, peace, peace, when there is no peace<sup>1</sup>"; deeper still is the curse, when the wounded soul is itself the deceiver: when men fancy they have no hurt, are sensible to no smart, fear no death, but lull themselves into fatal security, that the Saviour of the world must be *their* Saviour—not because, as sick, they need and seek a physician—but merely because they are called by his name! Whereas if men would have the Saviour of the world to be a Saviour to *them*, they must first feel their need of salvation—or they will not go to him to save them—if He is to heal them, they must first feel the smart

simple and the lowly; and sometimes—in his inscrutable wisdom—even the unworthy; that while man is permitted to dispense the blessings of the divine mercy to his fellow-men, the praise may be alone of God. It was neither the glorious rivers—Abana and Pharpar—nor the mighty waters of the everlasting ocean, but the despised stream of Jordan, which, when sanctified to the washing of the unclean, restored the leper to his purity. 2 Kings v. 14.

The example of Uzziah, son of Amaziah, is also left on record,—2 Chron. xxvi. 16 to 21—as a fearful warning against an unauthorized assumption of the priesthood. Uzziah, king of Judah, took upon himself to offer incense in the temple—an office which was reserved exclusively to the priest. He was in a signal manner struck with *leprosy*; and was a leper unto the day of his death. In all *other* respects irreproachable, in *this* he "transgressed against "the Lord"—and in *this* he suffered; "for he was cut off from the "house of the Lord."

<sup>1</sup> Jer. vi. 14.

of their wound—if he is to give life to their souls, they must first feel that they are dead in trespasses and sin. This sensibility to the wound of sin—to its pain and danger—is the gift of that grace of God, for which we here pray, and which is *freely offered* to us *all*<sup>1</sup>. Nor can we too earnestly pray for it.

<sup>1</sup> It is lamentable to observe the opposite sentiments of many professing Christians respecting the doctrine of grace. Some arrogate to themselves its arbitrary and irresistible and exclusive assurance; whilst others, feeling none of those strong impulses alleged to be the necessary indications of its influence, despair altogether of its aid. Both are in error. Every page of Holy Writ testifies that our heavenly Father is accessible to *all*; “*for every one that asketh, receiveth*; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened.” It is evident by this plain assertion, that our Saviour would direct us *not* to wait for any extraordinary suggestions of the Spirit to draw us to God; but to feel our need of his gracious aid, and pray for a supply of it. By thus acting, we detract nothing from the nature or influence of grace, either as a free gift, or as the only power to save. “*By grace we are saved.*” But in *asking* of God his assistance, our very petition implies, that it is of his *free* grace to give or to withhold—by *seeking* his favour, our search itself supposes our sense of previous loss—and by *knocking* at the door of mercy, our solicitations do themselves evidence, that of ourselves we can have no right to enter.

Our Church, understanding the doctrine in this plain scriptural sense of it, and preserving upon the subject her usual beautiful consistency, confesses the grace of God to be not only the support of spiritual life, but also the source of it: yet—keeping ever in view the divine *encouragement* to “*ask*,” and the assured *promise* that “*every one that asketh, receiveth*”—she holds all her sons responsible for the use of that grace, which is *offered* to *all*; she considers it *their* part to avail themselves of their covenanted privilege of access to God—the privilege of approaching him with prayer for the grace they need. She allows no loiterer in religion to plead that he is waiting for his *call* to *grace*; every word of the Gospel of God, is as a call from God.

So long indeed as the Spirit declares that if we “*seek the Lord*, he will be *found* of us,” 2 Chron. xv. 2. we are unceasingly in-

Without it, we are dead in sin, and insensible to our wretchedness; or we are but alive to misery, and like the wounded hart upon the mountains, seek rest but find none: the fatal arrow is fixed deeply in us; and we cannot fly from pain, because we cannot fly from ourselves. If this grace be humbly and sincerely sought, it will be surely gained. We then become conscious of the pain of sin; and anxiously seek a remedy—even Jesus Christ, the healer of the nations—himself our only hope of pardon here, and of life everlasting hereafter. Animated by this hope, we live again; “alive unto God, through Jesus Christ.” We see the real value of *this* life to consist in a right use of it with *reference* to the *next*; and we learn, that rightly used, as a state of probation, it is the appointed time wherein we may work out our own salvation. We shall trifle, therefore, no longer; but each own with St. Paul; “when I was a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things”—we shall put away the *vain* fears, and the *vain* hopes which so long unworthily occupied us; and strenuously set ourselves to the great and “*one thing needful*”—the working out our salvation<sup>1</sup>. Every faculty of the

structed, *not to delay* the duties of religion, till some fancied impulse of the Spirit drives us thereto; but first to *seek* God and to *ask* of him that grace without which we can neither think or do what is rightful; but which is promised, and faithfully promised to us all; in order that we *may* so think and act—may be thereby made holy and just, and good, and by its sure though imperceptible influence, be sanctified here, and hereafter glorified; through the sole merits of Jesus Christ our Lord.

<sup>1</sup> Luke x. 42. Our salvation is the one thing “*pre-eminently needful*.” Refer to a Note in page 20.



soul being strengthened in the inner man, every power enlarged, every fear duly regulated, every hope worthily directed, we shall wonder, that the world and its trifles could ever have pleased us: new views and higher objects will occupy our minds. The "blast of vain doctrine" will assault us unharmed. Indeed, the stedfast soul will not be moved from its duty by any temptations: in prosperity it will not forget its dependance upon God, in the season of adversity will not lose its reliance upon Him; in *life* will not swerve from its *faith*, nor fail of its *hope* in *death*. Like a house grafted as it were into a rock, the true Christian will stand firm. Let the rain descend, and the winds beat, and the floods come—He *cannot* be moved, for *not only* is he *founded* upon a rock but he is *united* with it—and therefore standeth fast for ever<sup>1</sup>. Hence the Apostle's earnest and beautiful benediction to his congregation; "The God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Jesus Christ, after that ye have suffered awhile, make you perfect, *stablish, strengthen, settle* you. To Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen<sup>2</sup>".

<sup>1</sup> John xvii. 20, 21. "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that *they* all may be *one*, as Thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee; that *they* also may be *one in us*; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me."

<sup>2</sup> 1 Peter v. 10.

## 75. ST. PHILIP AND ST. JAMES' DAY.

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ST. PHILIP, the Apostle, was an inhabitant of Bethsaida, and was called to the Apostleship, the day after Peter and Andrew: but, though called after them, he was the first constant attendant upon the Lord; the others returning to their usual occupation for a time, before they entirely devoted themselves as Apostles. He preached the Gospel chiefly in Upper Asia, and died a martyr at Hierapolis, a city of Phrygia—where he was either hanged to a pillar, or crucified.

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ST. JAMES—the son of Cleopas—was called the brother of our Lord, because he was near of kin to him, and it was very usual to term near relations, brethren, in token of close affection. His parents were Christians of exemplary piety. He was the first bishop of Jerusalem; and in the year 62 wrote his Epistle, addressed principally to the twelve tribes. At the close of that same year he died a martyr; having been first thrown from the battlements of the temple, and then slain by the blow of a club.

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*O ALMIGHTY God, whom truly to know is everlasting life; Grant us perfectly to know thy Son Jesus Christ to be the way, the truth, and the life; that following the steps of thy holy Apostles, St. Philip and St. James, we may stedfastly walk in the way that leadeth to eternal life, through the same thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

WHEN the Son of God was about to “go and prepare a place” for his disciples, “I will come again,” saith he, “and receive you unto myself,

“that where I am, there ye may be also; and whither I go, ye know, and the way ye know.” Upon this, Thomas—whose enquiries shew him to have been at the same time of slow comprehension, but of most upright intention, and enquiring *only* for the further confirmation of his faith—saith unto Jesus, “Lord, we know not whither thou goest, and how can we know the way?” Jesus saith unto him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life<sup>1</sup>.”

Taking this Scripture for its authority, our Collect, after addressing Almighty God as the Being “whom truly to know is everlasting life,” immediately proceeds to point out Jesus Christ as “the way, the truth, and the life”—because we have no saving knowledge of God, as the author of everlasting life, except through his Son. “No man,” saith Christ, “cometh unto the Father but by me<sup>2</sup>.” Truly to know the Father, we must truly know the Son<sup>3</sup>. By thus designating himself “as the way, the truth, and the life,” the Saviour beautifully illustrates the varied nature of his office. *He is the way*—the strait and narrow way of holiness, which without his guidance we could not find, and without his assistance could not keep. He directs us where to find this guidance; and how to gain this assistance; even by searching diligently the Scriptures. “Search the Scriptures; for in *them* ye think ye have eternal life.” In them the directions for a holy life are laid down so distinctly, and the sources

<sup>1</sup> John xiv. 6.

<sup>2</sup> John xiv. 6.

<sup>3</sup> John xvii. 3. “This is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.”

whence we can gain the aid we need, are so clearly pointed out, that we have but to “seek, and we shall find.” If we lose our road, or faint by the way, the error and the failure are our own. He who in his word hath pointed out to us this road, himself walked in it, and by his Spirit—if we be *instant* in prayer for the same—will conduct us to it, and support us on our way till we pass to our rest in Heaven. Christ is the *truth*. The true path is *that* pointed out to us by his holy Gospel; and the true guide, his holy Spirit. Christ is also the *Life*. In him we must be born again, new creatures, alive unto God. We must be renewed both as to the character of our actions, and the motives of them. We must animate ourselves to a spiritual life in Christ here, in the hope of eternal *Life* through him hereafter.

When, therefore, you repeat this Collect, examine yourself, whether Jesus Christ be to *you*, *individually*, “the way, the truth, and the life.” Judge yourself, whether you guide *your way* of life by the precepts of his gospel—true and just in all your dealings, of a sober and godly conversation, forgiving those who injure you, restraining your evil tempers, and doing to others as you would that others should do to you. Is he the *truth* to *you*? In vain to *you*, is the only true light which lighteth every man, come into the world, unless he open *your* understanding to know the true course of duty, the true motive for performing it, and the true ground on which you rest your hope, of attaining its promised reward hereafter. Is he your *life*? Does faith in him, as the strength of your salvation, and the ground of your hope, quicken and animate you to live unto

God? These are questions to which your own reason and conscience can supply the answer. If you walk in the way of *holiness*, you know that you are walking in the strait and narrow way, which leadeth unto life—and *that way* is Christ. Again, if happily you find religion to give true support in time of temptation, true comfort in the season of sorrow, true consolation in the prospect of death; to *you* Christ is the *truth*. So likewise *whosoever* is active in every good word and work—in “love, joy, “peace, long-suffering, quietness, goodness, faith, “meekness, temperance<sup>1</sup>,”—let *him* know assuredly, that *these* being the works of the *Spirit*, prove him to have that spiritual *life*, of which Christ himself is the author.

If by God's grace upon your prayers, you be enabled thus “perfectly to know his Son Jesus Christ “to be the way, the truth, and the life,” you then follow the steps of the holy apostles St. Philip and St. James, and may hope “stedfastly to walk,” as they walked, “in the way that leadeth to eternal “life, through the same Jesus Christ our Lord.” Once in this path, keep it. Keep it, however narrow, however thorny, however rugged, however toilsome<sup>2</sup>. Let not the fair prospects of pleasure which

<sup>1</sup> Gal. v. 22, 23.

<sup>2</sup> The ways of religion are described by the wise man, to be “ways “of pleasantness, and all her paths peace.” And the Gospel was announced as bringing “peace on earth, and good-will towards “men.” Yet our blessed Lord declared to his apostles, “Think “not that I am come to send peace on earth: I am come not to “send peace, but a sword.”

Now these different accounts of the effects of Christianity involve no contradiction. Both are founded upon the most perfect know-



you may sometimes see around you, lure you from that path; nor let the lowering storms, which in their turn may sometimes hang over you, tempt you to stop short in your course. You are a traveller. You have nothing more to do with the country through which you pass, than to fulfil the conditions which you are directed to observe, by Him who appoints you to travel through it. *Home* is your object; and *that* home, *Heaven*.

Then, O Christian Pilgrim, weary not! cast thy burthen upon the Lord; He will sustain thee. Art thou heavy laden? He will refresh thee. He will shew thee the well of life; will freely give thee to drink of its waters; and so refresh and comfort thee in thy passage through the wilderness, that thou

ledge of human character. Where sin, prejudice, or ignorance prevail, there the Gospel doctrines are met with opposition and contention. Again, where they find good dispositions, meekness, and humility, there is "joy and peace in believing." In cases, where a religious life brings upon us the hatred or contempt of others, we must learn to prefer the greater to the lesser good. Peace with men is a desirable good; but peace with our God is better. If therefore it happen, that in serving God, we do not find peace with our fellow-creatures—if our good be evil spoken of, if in our dealings we be unsuccessful, if worldly vexations increase, if the consequences of a pious life be to us, what our Lord so affectingly assures us will sometimes happen—even that "*our foes shall be they of our own household*"—Matth. x. 36. the evil arises, not from religion in ourselves, but from the want of it in others. Religion is the balance, as it were, against all other ills, however perplexing, and whencesoever arising. It gives us peace, when all things else bring "a sword;" it supplies a sure remedy, by that "peace of God which passeth all understanding"—a peace, which is the earnest of his favour here, and the foretaste vouchsafed to the good of his favour and love hereafter; through the sole merits of Jesus Christ, our Mediator and Redeemer.

wilt find him to be not only the “way and the truth,” but “the life” also—life to thy soul; now and for ever! Amen.

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## 76. ST. BARNABAS THE APOSTLE.

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The proper name of this Apostle was Joseph; or, in Greek, Joses. Barnabas was an additional name; signifying the son of consolation, and given to him in allusion to the consolation he was enabled to supply to his poorer Christian brethren, by supporting them with the money for which he sold his goods. Acts iv. 36, 37.

He was one of the disciples of our Blessed Lord, but not one of the twelve chosen Apostles. Though his family lived at Cyprus, they were Jews of the tribe of Levi, and he was himself sent for education to Jerusalem, and placed under the care of the learned Gamaliel. During that period of his life probably he became acquainted with St. Paul, who was himself also “brought up under the feet of Gamaliel.” With that Apostle he afterwards made many journies; labouring together with him in preaching the Gospel of Christ to the Heathen world.

He is generally supposed to have died by martyrdom.

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*O LORD God Almighty, who didst endue thy holy Apostle Barnabas with singular gifts of the Holy Ghost; Leave us not, we beseech thee, destitute of thy manifold gifts, nor yet of grace to use them always to thy honour and glory, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

THE recorded acts of this Apostle shew us, that our Collect with great propriety speaks of him, as having been endued with “singular gifts of the Holy Ghost.”

Such was his high character for firmness of faith, and sanctity of life<sup>1</sup>, that he was selected as a fit person to settle the form and discipline of the new Church at Antioch<sup>2</sup>. When nearly two years had elapsed after his appointment to that office, he, and St. Paul, who had for some time assisted him at Antioch, were expressly set apart by the Holy Ghost to preach the gospel to the Gentiles<sup>3</sup>. Accordingly we find them so engaged in various parts of Asia; confirming their claim to a divine mission, by miracles, and signs, and wonders. The conversion of Sergius Paulus, the Roman Deputy at Paphos<sup>4</sup>, was the result of an awful exercise of their

<sup>1</sup> Acts xi. 24.

<sup>2</sup> Acts xi. 26. *This Antioch* was the capital of *Syria*; where the followers of Jesus Christ were *first* called Christians; A.D. 43,—ten years after the death of our Saviour.

*Antioch*, in *Pisidia*, was also visited by the Apostle.

<sup>3</sup> Acts xiii. 2.

<sup>4</sup> I cannot forbear calling the attention of my younger readers to the striking instance, which we have in this history, of internal testimony to the truths of Holy Writ, by their close accordance with some *public event*, which could not have been invented; which could have been observed only by those who recorded truth as they found it; and the certainty of which could be abundantly confirmed by the collateral testimony of other historians.

Sergius Paulus is called in our translation a *deputy*; the original Greek word means a *Proconsul*. Now this would at first appear incorrect, because the island of Cyprus, of which Paphos was a city, was one of the Roman Provinces, originally assigned to the *Emperor*; and *his* deputy was properly termed *Proprætor*; whereas in the provinces assigned to the *Senate*, their representative was called *Proconsul*. But it appears, from the historian of those times\*, that the province of

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\* The name of this historian is Dio Cassius, who flourished about the year 230, and wrote a Roman history in the Greek language. He was born at Nicæa, a city of Phrygia.

powers, in striking, with sudden blindness, the false prophet Elymas<sup>1</sup>. In journeying through other extensive parts of Asia, their preaching was so acceptable to the Gentiles, to whom indeed they were especially sent, that the doctrine they preached on one Sabbath, was eagerly called for on the next<sup>2</sup>. At Lystra they worked so glorious a miracle upon a man born lame, that when the people saw him who never before had walked, "leaping and walking," "they lifted up their voices, saying in the speech of "Lycaonia, the gods are come down to us in the "likeness of men"<sup>3</sup>". The future separation of these Apostles, though the cause of much sorrow to the Church at the time, was turned, by the overruling providence of God, to its benefit; by giving to each Apostle a more extended field for action, and thereby enlarging the borders of the kingdom of Christ.

*Cyprus* had been transferred to the *Senate*, in exchange for some other province. Consequently the Deputy of it, by means of this unusual arrangement, is properly called a Proconsul; retaining by *custom* under the *Emperor's* immediate jurisdiction, the same title which would have belonged *rightly* to him, had the province continued under the jurisdiction of the *Senate*.

Thus we find the Scripture term so accurate, that the variation of circumstances is observed with the utmost fidelity. At the same time, there is no notice taken of the change. Truth anticipates no particular enquiry, and therefore does not exercise any particular caution.

This observation applies to the whole and every part of Holy Writ: the accuracy of which, in reference to particular events, and in allusion to, or in conformity with the various political changes which occurred at the times when its several parts were written, will be found uniformly confirmed by the testimony of other writers—whether historians, poets, or philosophers.

<sup>1</sup> Elymas is an Arabian word, and means "magician."

<sup>2</sup> Acts xiii. 42.

<sup>3</sup> Acts xiv. 11.

After contemplating the active display by Barnabas of his “singular gifts of the Holy Ghost,” we naturally pass to the *prayer* of this Collect, and beseech the Lord God Almighty to “leave us neither “ destitute of his manifold gifts, nor of grace to use “ them always to his honour and glory.” And what if the gifts vouchsafed to *us* be not, like the Apostle’s, singularly full, singularly conspicuous? We are privileged to ask, and we are encouraged to expect—if we ask faithfully—*such* a measure of these gifts, as is *apportioned* to our *need*, and *necessary* to our *Salvation*. Gifts of healing by a word are not to be expected by us: the working of miracles has ceased with its necessity: the word of prophecy is closed. Still, since “there are diversities of gifts, but the “ same Spirit;” since, moreover, “the manifestation “ of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal,” we cannot do better than follow the plain and practical advice of St. Paul, “covet earnestly the *best* “ gifts<sup>1</sup>:”—“love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance<sup>2</sup>:” *these* are still the gifts of that Spirit, for which we are directed to pray, and to our prayer for which we are permitted to expect an answer of peace<sup>3</sup>. Nor let the humble fear lest it should be beyond their power to exercise these gifts “to the honour and “ glory” of the Almighty. If the giving a cup of cold water to the thirsty, for *Christ’s* sake, “lose “ not its reward” before the tribunal of Heaven<sup>4</sup>; it is evident, by parity of reasoning, that whenever, by

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. xii. 4. 7. 31.      <sup>2</sup> Gal. v. 22, 23.      <sup>3</sup> Matth. vii. 7, 8.

<sup>4</sup> Mark ix. 41. See the note, page 340.



the help of the grace given us, we check an evil temper, subdue a proud spirit, forgive our enemy, conquer ourselves, and “bring into captivity every “thought to the obedience of Christ<sup>1</sup>;”—in all such cases “we use the gift to the honour and glory of “God.” We shew ourselves disciples indeed.

We may not then, like Paul and Barnabas, be called to give miraculous powers to the cripple, or to strike with blindness the despisers of the word—we may not be called, as they were, to “tell it out “among the *Heathen* that the Lord is King<sup>2</sup>:” still we have “a calling and election,” which we are bound to “make sure;” and we must remember to “come behind in no gift<sup>3</sup>.” We are still called to tell it out among our *brethren*—tell it out by a life of holiness—that the Lord is *our* King, whom we wish to serve “with a perfect heart, and a will-“ing mind<sup>4</sup>:” we are called to shame the busy mocker, and by an increased perseverance in active piety, to give proof of the sincerity of our own faith: we are called to help our fellow-pilgrims on their way, by the encouragement of our example, that “seeing our good works,” they may be animated to go on rejoicing in a holy way, and so “to let *their* “light also shine before men, that others, seeing the “good works” of the faithful servants of God, may thence learn to do likewise, and so we may together “glorify our Father which is in heaven<sup>5</sup>.”

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. x. 5.<sup>2</sup> Psalm xcvi. 10.<sup>3</sup> 1 Cor. i. 7.<sup>4</sup> 1 Chron. xxviii. 9.<sup>5</sup> Matth. v. 16.

## 77. ST. JOHN BAPTIST'S DAY.

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ST. JOHN the Baptist was ordained by God to prepare the minds of men for receiving, as their Saviour, the long-promised Messiah. The title of *Baptist* was given to him, because he *baptized*—or dipped into water—those who, confessing their sins, wished to lead *pure* lives. Washing with water being a very significant representation of such purity.

He was the son of Zacharias and Elizabeth. The miraculous circumstances attending his birth are recorded in the first and second chapters of St. Luke's Gospel.

He was preserved in infancy from the malice of Herod, by his mother, who, according to divine appointment, carefully removed him from public notice, and kept him in seclusion. Thus safe in privacy, "*The child grew and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his shewing unto Israel.*" When the appointed day was arrived, we find him amidst multitudes, calling all men to the Saviour; and directing them to Jesus Christ, as the great expected prophet, and the long-promised sacrifice for sin; "*Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world!*"

He died a martyr; falling a sacrifice to the deep cunning, and unshrinking ferocity of a guilty and revengeful woman.

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*ALMIGHTY God, by whose providence thy servant John Baptist was wonderfully born, and sent to prepare the way of thy Son our Saviour, by preaching of repentance; Make us so to follow his doctrine and holy life, that we may truly repent according to his preaching; and after his example, constantly speak the truth, boldly rebuke vice, and patiently suffer for the truth's sake, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

IF we attentively trace the fulfilment of Prophecy, as evidenced in the character of St. John, we must adopt the conclusion to which the Collect draws us; and confess, that by the "*Providence* of Almighty God, John Baptist was wonderfully born, and sent "to prepare the way for his Son our Saviour." What Power, less than Divine, could have guided the Prophets<sup>1</sup>, in drawing the character of St. John, many ages before he appeared? Who but the ALMIGHTY could have so controlled events, that they should exactly answer to their predictions? Who but the same Being could so prepare the minds of his chosen people that they should receive the Messenger, who himself was to "prepare the way of their Lord;" and "make straight in the desert an highway for their God?" Yet these prophets *were* so guided; these events so controlled; and the minds of men so fully prepared, that "*all* counted *John*, "that *he* was a *Prophet* indeed<sup>2</sup>." As the forerunner of the Messiah, he fulfilled the annunciation of the Angel, that his birth should be cause of joy to many; that "he should be filled with the Holy Ghost," and "make ready the people prepared for "the Lord." He was therefore evidently ordained to the work by the good providence of Almighty God.

The Angel who announced the Baptist, declared of himself, "I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence

<sup>1</sup> Isaiah and Malachi.

<sup>2</sup> Mark xi. 32. and again Matth. xiv. 5. Herod's thirst for vengeance upon St. John was staid, and his anger curbed, through fear of the multitude, who, in admiration of the Baptist's singular piety, and high spiritual gifts, "*counted him as a Prophet.*"

“ of God ;” and in *sign* of his divine mission he assured the doubting Zacharias, “ behold thou shalt “ be dumb and not able to speak, until the day that “ these things shall be performed.” The *sign* was *fulfilled*. Zacharias became dumb ; nor was his speech restored, till after the birth of the child. Then, upon changing his intention of calling the child by his own name, and writing that his *name* was *John*, he “ found his mouth to be opened immediately, and his tongue loosed ;” “ and fear came “ upon all them that dwelt round about them.”

To shew himself the forerunner of the Messiah by a bold preaching of repentance, and by a lofty eloquence persuade men to receive a King, whose kingdom was not of this world—St. John was pre-eminently qualified. That he was called to the work by the express will of God, was indeed of itself the primary and sufficient qualification. But he was further qualified, as to outward circumstances ; the very local peculiarities of his situation, being especially favourable in forming a mind, which might hope to engage successfully in an office so arduous. The solitary scenery of the deserts<sup>1</sup> in which he was

<sup>1</sup> Luke i. 80. “ And the child grew, and waxed strong in the “ spirit, and was in the *deserts* till the day of his shewing unto “ Israel.” Matth. iii. 1, 2. “ In those days came John the Baptist, “ preaching in the *wilderness* of Judea, and saying, repent ye: for “ the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” John i. 28. “ These things “ were done in *Bethabara* beyond Jordan, where John was baptizing.”

Any *lonely* place, whether cultivated or uncultivated, was known by the general term of a *desert*, or *wilderness*. The plain, however, through which the river Jordan flowed in its approach to the dead

brought up, and the wild range of the wilderness in which he proclaimed "the kingdom of heaven," tended to foster a bold and dauntless spirit—an unwonted high-mindedness—which being reckless equally of pleasure which might enervate, and danger which might appal, was exactly calculated to exemplify his doctrine, and afford a practical illustration of that disregard of this world, and ardent aspiration after a better, which he so unreservedly professed himself, and so strenuously urged upon others. Thus nurtured in seclusion, he attained an elevation of character, which we should have vainly looked for in him, had he shared the usual converse of men, and been engaged in the less noble pursuits of the world around him. As often, too, as he required from others self-control and the exercise of spiritual discipline, he could refer to his own life, in proof that what he enjoined was practicable. If he called any man to severe duties, he himself was not backward to practise the severest. His whole life in the body—as a life of austerity and mortification—was an admirable representation of that spiritual life of self-denial, and self-abasement, which must ever attend the course he prescribed of repentance and humiliation before God. When, therefore, he

sea, from *Bethabara*, southward, assumed a peculiarly wild character; its banks being there closely shaded with trees, exhibiting striking and unusual scenery, well adapted to quietude and seclusion; and tending, by the opportunities it afforded for meditation, to raise the affections from the contemplation of the works of God, to a devout and holy adoration of his power, and an absorbing dedication of the soul to his service and honour.



appeared—clothed in a garment of camel's hair, a leathern girdle about his loins, and bold in the spirit of unworldliness—imagination could not picture a character more completely fitted for the unsparing labour to which he was called “by the providence of God.”

As his preaching was calculated to lead men to repentance, so his *example* may animate us to be exercised in *good*: ready, “constantly to speak the truth, boldly to rebuke vice, patiently to suffer for the truth's sake;” and to imitate that *constancy*, *boldness*, and *patience*, which in *him* shone so uniformly conspicuous.

He was *constant* in declaring Jesus Christ to be the true Messiah. Even the prospect of greatness, which opened to him when the multitude sought *him* as the Saviour, could not shake his constancy. He spoke the *truth*. He directed all enquirers to the Son of Mary, as the “mightier than he,” as “the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world<sup>1</sup>.” Neither was he a false prophet, saying “peace, peace, when there is no peace,”—he declared the unwelcome truth, that, without repentance, there is no freedom either from the power of sin here, or the punishment due to it hereafter; “repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” From preaching to the multitude this general declaration of the doctrine of repentance, he was soon called *boldly* to *rebuke vice* in the individual. The open profligacy of Herod Antipas, and Herodias his wife, called forth the full energies of the Baptist's

<sup>1</sup> John i. 29.

holy and zealous indignation<sup>1</sup>. “Bold as a lion”<sup>2</sup> in the cause of righteousness, he feared not the face of man. Anger could not daunt him; danger could not check him. He denounced against the profligates the just judgment of God, for “all their ungodly deeds which they had ungodly committed:” amid all their revellings, he still reminded them of the worm that dieth not, and the fire that is not quenched. The same firmness of character displayed itself, when the boldness of his reproof was visited by imprisonment. We hear of no murmuring, no compromise of duty upon the prospect of hardship and death. He was a *patient sufferer*. He looked to the recompence of reward. His crown was ready; and he died for the truth’s sake. Were testimony required to his high excellency, we have it in this memorable fact; that the voice which bade him die, was that which had declared him to be “a just man, and an holy,” and the king who took his life, wept over him<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Herod Philip, to whom Herodias had first been married, was alive when she married Herod Antipas; and was the father of her daughter Salome.

<sup>2</sup> Prov. xxviii. 1. “The righteous are bold as a lion.”

<sup>3</sup> In consenting that John should be beheaded, Herod exhibited that strange inconsistency of fearing the lesser, more than the greater evil—he feared to offend man, but he feared not to offend God.

He feared the people, and therefore had hitherto refrained from executing his prisoner. He feared also the scorn of his abandoned wife; and when he had once passed his word to grant her daughter any wish, even to the half of his kingdom, he had not courage to resist her, though her request caused him exceeding sorrowfulness. But all this time he feared not the vengeance of Almighty God.

How should we be warned to fear God! “The fear of the Lord

Thus we see united in St. John, a grandeur and simplicity of character, which even an enemy held in honour. Should we not do well to imitate him?

Let us *constantly speak the truth*. Let not our practice contradict our profession. In whatever circumstances we may be placed, let neither dread of shame nor hope of advantage withhold us from a bold and unwearied confession, that we are the servants of Christ to do his righteous will. If from fear of reproach, or apprehension of injury, we are not constant to the truth—if we are backward ever to confess the obligations of religion upon our conduct—it were prudent at least to remember the awful alternative: “Whosoever shall confess me  
“before men, him will I confess also before my  
“Father which is in heaven; but whosoever shall  
“*deny* me before men, *him* will *I* also *deny* before  
“my Father which is in heaven<sup>1</sup>.” Let us likewise “*boldly rebuke vice*”—prudently indeed, yet without fear. Even that charity, which beareth all things, is perfectly consistent with a holy zeal for religion’s sake; for it “rejoices not in iniquity, but  
“rejoiceth in the truth”—it feels bound to declare its abhorrence of what is evil, lest otherwise it be justly charged with indifference to what is good. The best rebuke to vice, however, in social inter-

“is” indeed “the beginning of wisdom,” and removes all other fear. How should we also learn to *resist* the *first* risings of revenge! See! how revenge could brace even a *woman’s* heart to a *deliberate* act of blood: “Give me *by and by* in a charger the head of John  
“the Baptist.”—Reader! Love thine enemy! Enmity allows no middle course.

<sup>1</sup> Matth. x. 32, 33.

course, is a strictly virtuous conduct on our own part. A vicious mind stands abashed by its contrast with unaffected piety; and the eye of the scorner drops before the dauntless brow of a faithful soldier of Christ. But if after all, contempt and injury should accrue from keeping our course of holiness, we may still follow the Baptist's path, and "*patiently suffer for the truth's sake*;" watching always, "that no man take our crown<sup>1</sup>." What though we may sometimes in a spirit of despondency adopt the complaint of David, and mourn that "the wicked are in such prosperity," whilst "the faithful," oppressed and persecuted, "are minished from among the children of men;" and that the example of the good and holy, shines neglected and scorned, whilst the wicked flourish like a green bay-tree, and riches and honour crown them—what if it sometimes thus *seem*, that the course of this world's ordering be in opposition to the acknowledged justice of heaven—God's ways *are* and *must* be equal, and just, and true. Should doubts of his goodness ever rise, like a cloud, to darken us, *then* is it high time to exercise our faith—*Faith* "the evidence of things *not seen*." Faith alone can then avail to burst the cloud of doubts which this world interposes, and enable us to carry our views onward, even to that great day of the Lord, when, in a more extended sense than even in these days of Gospel Light, every apparent inequality in the dispensations of God, shall be made plain to an assembled creation; when

<sup>1</sup> Rev. iii. 11. "Behold I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown."

“ every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain  
 “ and hill shall be made low, and the crooked  
 “ shall be made straight, and the rough places  
 “ plain <sup>1</sup>,” and all flesh shall see the salvation of God  
 —shall see in the everlasting punishment of the  
 impenitent wicked, and the eternal happiness of the  
 righteous, that however divine justice be delayed  
 in merciful forbearance towards evil men <sup>2</sup>, and for  
 the more perfect trial of the good, it is yet *sure*.  
 The *wages* of *sin*, if not paid even till the final  
 judgment, are still the sinner's due, and will then be  
 paid with *death* : so also, just *recompense*, though  
 withheld for the few short years of his mortal exist-  
 ence, yet remains for the penitent ; and *that* recom-  
 pense will be *life eternal*.

<sup>1</sup> Isaiah xl. 4. It is by thus smoothing the various difficulties which meet us, that religion proves herself to be the author of peace in social and domestic life. She *makes low* the lofty thoughts of pride, and so removes the causes of contention—she *exalts* the soul to heavenly hopes, and so reduces to their proper level all worldly objects, that we assign to each only its proper value—she turns us from the course of a *crooked* worldly policy, and leads us to the *straight* path of integrity before men, and sincerity before God—she smooths the *roughest* toils of our pilgrimage, by enabling us to endure them patiently—in short she supplies to us the place of whatever else may fail us ; and so makes the Christian's path straight, and *plain*, and *sure*.

Refer to the note in page 30, upon Matth. xix. 29,—a passage, full of comfortable thoughts to the “ afflicted and distressed ; whether in mind, body, or estate.”

<sup>2</sup> Exod. xxxiv. 6. Psalm lxxxvi. 15. 2 Pet. iii. 9.



## 78. ST. PETER'S DAY.

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SIMON, son of Jonah, was a fisherman of Bethsaida, a town situated upon the shore of the Sea of Galilee. Like his brother Andrew, he was one of the twelve Apostles of Christ. His Lord gave him the additional *Syriac* name of *Cephas*; which in the *Greek* language is called PETROS, and means a *Rock*.

He suffered martyrdom on the same day with St. Paul, in the year 67. At his own request, he was crucified with his head downward; in order that his death might be distinguished from the death of his crucified Master, by a more marked and painful humiliation.

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*O ALMIGHTY GOD, who by thy Son Jesus Christ, didst give thy Apostle St. Peter many excellent gifts, and commandest him earnestly to feed thy flock; make, we beseech thee, all Bishops and Pastors diligently to preach thy holy Word, and the people obediently to follow the same; that they may receive the crown of everlasting glory, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

OF the various human characters presented to us in the holy Scriptures, none more decidedly arrests our attention, or excites a more lively interest in us, than that of St. Peter. Some we see so eminent equally in the services to which they were called, and in the success which marked their fulfilment of them, that, as they move in their bright sphere like stars above us, their very splendour, whilst it fixes our admiration, deters from imitation. Their fears and hopes, their views of duty and happiness, seem

all of a higher order, and fitted for a higher world—we cannot make them our own—and so difficult altogether is it to enter into the feelings of another, whose course of life is widely removed from us, that the application of their example is rendered all but hopeless. With respect to the example of St. Peter the case is far different. Who does not see himself reflected in the weeping Apostle? Alas! the best of men can but too feelingly understand the bitterness of sorrow, the depth of humiliation, the agony of remorse, which melted into anguish the conscious, heart-stricken sinner. Therefore it is, that the example of St. Peter touches us so nearly! We *all* must contemplate *his* character with the closest regard, for who does not find it applicable to himself? St. Peter was, what *we* must be, if we would be “called the sons of God”—a *penitent*<sup>1</sup>. Fallen

<sup>1</sup> The scene, in which he is presented to us as a penitent, is drawn with the most affecting and forcible simplicity. The high-minded Peter, who, with an ardour bordering upon impetuosity, had a few hours before pledged his fidelity to the death, and drawn his sword to redeem the pledge, thrice denies even his knowledge of the very Being to whom he had devoted his life, and for whom he had risked it. His three several denials, each accompanied by a stronger asseveration, are minutely recorded for our instruction; that we might ever bear in mind the *progressive* character of sin, and its increased power over us in proportion as it is yielded to! It is impossible to contemplate without pain the fallen Apostle, standing in the palace of the High Priest, despised by others, most despised by himself, and hearing at length the cock-crowing, which,—too quick a monitor—brought back, in full tide, his wonted feelings of attachment and fidelity. No *word* was needed. “The Lord turned, and *looked* upon Peter.” What mute yet commanding eloquence in that look! It struck to the heart; “and Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, before the

creatures as we are ; “ by nature children of wrath,” and outcasts from the presence of God ; we can look to be received again only as penitents. And in this character we the more firmly hope for acceptance, when we turn to the sorrowing Peter, and see him received into the divine favour so fully, that the weeping penitent is made the chosen shepherd of the fold ; and “ Almighty God, by his Son Jesus Christ, “ did give to him many excellent gifts, and commanded *him* earnestly to feed his flock.”

The extent to which these gifts were granted to St. Peter, is evidenced by the miracles which followed them, and which satisfactorily proved his commission to be from God. So great indeed was the favour of our Lord to him, that in the memorable scene after the resurrection, when he solemnly committed his Church to the care of the assembled Apostles, though the same commission was conveyed to all, he addressed his charge to Peter. This he did, *not* with a view of holding up that Apostle as pre-eminent among his fellow Apostles in the ministry, *but* with the benevolent intention of encouraging the penitent, of soothing the contrite, and of calming feelings which had been perhaps painfully excited by the previous questions respecting the

“ cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice : and Peter went out and “ *wept bitterly.*” Luke xxii. 61, 62.

What a contrast to the cold and hardened Judas ! Judas added sin to sin, rushed from the guilt of treason to the deeper guilt of despair, and perished therein. Peter, agonized to tears of shame and remorse, turned him from his evil way, sought again the Lord he loved, and from a humble penitent became a watchful pastor of the flock of Christ.

Refer to pages 130. 137. and 303.

sincerity of his love<sup>1</sup>. He would also thus shew to his servants for ever, how gracious is the forbearance of God; how infinite his mercies; how perfect his love. Were especial marks of favour shewn to Peter?—So also is there “more joy over one sinner “that repenteth, than over ninety and nine just “persons who need no repentance<sup>2</sup>.” This affectionate mark of restored confidence kindled in Peter his wonted ardour in the cause of the Gospel, and we find him, thus encouraged, diligent with the other Apostles, to execute his charge with fidelity, and “earnestly to feed the flock,” entrusted to his care.

<sup>1</sup> We cannot but remark the subdued tone of Peter's reply to his Lord, when asked, “Peter, lovest thou me more than these?” It is no longer the ardent resolve, “Though I should die with thee, yet “will I not deny thee.” All is changed. The Apostle had learned wisdom by his former failure. He had learned that self-confidence is ruin; and that our only sure hope must be in God, to bring our good resolutions to good effect. He therefore boasts not of good resolutions for the future; but “in an honest and good heart,” declares the sincerity of his present feelings of attachment, by a most impressive and fearless appeal even to the Omniscience of his beloved Master—“Lord! *Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love “thee!”* John xxi. 17.

<sup>2</sup> Not because the penitent is better than the just. No man must sin that grace may abound; God forbid! *That* were to tempt the Lord God. But as a shepherd rejoiceth over a *lost* sheep without any diminution of care and anxiety towards the rest of his flock,—as a parent rejoices with exceeding joy at the recovery of a lost child, and is yet free from the charge either of partiality towards the child restored to him, or of diminished affection towards the children who remained in safety—so our heavenly Father condescends to encourage the wicked to repent and be saved, by assuring them of his ready and joyful acceptance of a returning prodigal.

Upon the subject of repentance the reader may refer to the Comment upon the Collect for the eleventh Sunday after Trinity—also to a Note in page 330.

From meditations upon the charge of Christ to his Apostles, we naturally turn in prayer to God for his blessing upon those, who now either constitute the flock, or are duly commissioned to feed it; and we beseech Almighty God to make “all *Bishops* and *Pastors* diligently to *preach* his holy Word, and the *people* obediently to *follow* the same.” In this proper spirit of dependence upon “the Father of Lights” for success in establishing the Gospel by preaching of the Word, we pray in our Litany, that it “may please him to illuminate all Bishops, Priests, and Deacons, with true knowledge and understanding of his Word, that both by their preaching and living they may set it forth, and shew it accordingly.” But Bishops and Pastors, though uniformly diligent, and exemplary equally in doctrine and in conduct, must after all, find their doctrine, and example unheeded, unless divine power bend the stubborn will of man to the discipline of the cross. Hence, in our congregational prayers, we further implore God “to give to *all his people* increase of *grace*, to hear meekly his Word, and to receive it with pure affection.” If *thus* the Word be received—as containing doctrines and precepts, threats and promises, not of man’s invention, but of God’s ordering,—*then* we may hope that the flocks and their appointed shepherds may so sojourn in the pastures prepared for them here, that they together reach at last the “pastures prepared for them in the *high places*<sup>1</sup>—even “by the pure river of the water of life<sup>2</sup>—

<sup>1</sup> Isaiah xlix. 9.

<sup>2</sup> Rev. xxii. 1.



where Christ shall resume his charge, and himself feed his flock like a shepherd for ever.

Humbly let us hope, that the divine blessing will attend both ministers and people, when by the exercise of faith unfeigned, of hope which endureth, of charity which never faileth, they *unite* in this labour of love—this working out salvation for their souls. That no inducement may be wanting to so blessed an union of spiritual labour, our Collect animates us by the noblest prospect which ambition could propose to itself, when its aim is the highest, or which faith might require as a support, when its difficulties are the most appalling. It holds out the glorious expectation, that we may *together* “receive *our Crown*—the Crown of *everlasting Glory*—“ through Jesus Christ our Lord.”



## 79. ST. JAMES THE APOSTLE.



THIS Apostle is called St. James the *Great*, to distinguish him from the other of the same name, who is called St. James the *Less*. The origin of the distinction may be traced to the greater *age* of the former.

His father, Zebedee, was one of the fishermen who frequented the Lake of Gennesareth; and his mother, Salome, was a woman of exemplary piety, related to the mother of Jesus, and one of her attendants at the cross, as she wept her crucified Son.

St. James was engaged in preaching to the dispersed Jews, and became so high in honour amongst the Christian brethren, that he was an object of especial hatred to the envious Jews. Herod Agrippa therefore, the king of Judæa, willing like his grandfather Herod the Great, “to do the Jews a pleasure,” ordered the Apostle to be beheaded. He was the first of the Apostles who suffered

death in the cause of religion. His martyrdom took place in the year 49; when Claudius was Emperor of Rome.

As Stephen was the foremost amongst the whole army of martyrs, so St. James the Great was the first among the martyred Apostles.

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*GRANT, O merciful God, that as thine holy Apostle St. James, leaving his father and all that he had, without delay was obedient unto the calling of thy Son Jesus Christ, and followed him; so we, forsaking all worldly and carnal affections, may be evermore ready to follow thy holy commandments, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

A RESIGNATION of worldly pleasures and worldly advantages, when they clash with our religious duties, is reasonably expected from every man, who professes to believe in God as the *future* rewarder of righteousness<sup>1</sup>. Indeed, so to resign the world, is but to act consistently with our profession, as followers of Christ, whose kingdom is *not* of this world. Such consistency is strikingly exemplified in the conduct of St. James; and forms a truly noble feature in his character. He was no sooner convinced by the miraculous draught of fishes, that Jesus was the Messiah, than he left “his father and *all* that he *had*, and without delay was obedient to the calling” of Christ. Disinterestedness is ever the character of a Christian<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> “Verily there is a reward for the righteous; verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth.” Psalm lviii. 11.

<sup>2</sup> Disinterestedness is an admirable test of sincerity.

When a Christian, without murmur or hesitation, foregoes worldly advantages within his reach, rather than by retaining them, give oc-

The scene of the Apostle's conversion is beautifully drawn; and the several actors in it are minutely and powerfully portrayed by St. Luke<sup>1</sup>. Our Saviour, having from a ship preached to the people as they thronged the beautiful shore of the lake of Gennesareth<sup>2</sup>, thought it a fit opportunity to confirm the heavenly doctrines which he preached, by some signal act of omnipotence. Addressing, therefore, Simon<sup>3</sup>, he desired that he, with his fellow-fisher-

casion to a weaker brother to doubt his religion, or an enemy to despise it, we may conclude him sincere in his profession. We understand too why it is, that when called to sacrifice worldly interests upon religious principle, he "without delay" obeys the call.—His "*treasure is in heaven.*" He professes to consider this world as "vanity," when compared to that glorious world, whither he is journeying. He therefore gladly gives up present perishing gain, when called thereto by the voice of duty: for to him, the call of duty is as the call of God.

On the other hand, if a professing Christian so eagerly "seek and hold to his own \*," that he gives, only when there is a prospect of recompense; rejoices at others' success, *only* when he himself shares it; plans for *his own* advantage only, and cautiously looks to the *worldly* result, ere he "choose to serve the Lord."—*Such* a man may call himself by the name of Christ, and make vast professions of regard for the religion of Christ; but where in him is the *Spirit* of Christ? Alas! vain were it to look in a selfish character for the Spirit of *Him*, who throughout life was a perfect example of the most noble disinterestedness; and who requires us, in the same spirit of love, to seek the good of others—to "love our neighbour as ourselves."

<sup>1</sup> Luke v. 1—11.

<sup>2</sup> This lake was sometimes called the sea of Galilee, sometimes the sea of Tiberias.

<sup>3</sup> *Simon*—whom our Lord afterwards named *Peter*.

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\* 1 Cor. xiii. 5. Charity—"seeketh not her own"—seeketh not her own in a worldly spirit; but is disinterested, in proof that she is sincere.

men James and John, would “launch into the deep” and let down their nets for a draught. And when “they had thus done, they inclosed a great multitude of fishes, and their net brake.” At length so vast a multitude of fishes were taken, that they “filled both the ships, so that they began to sink.” Astonished, as well they might be, at this miracle, the brothers James and John, with their partner Simon, “when they had brought their ship to land, “forsook all, and followed him<sup>1</sup>.”

In contemplating the devotedness of St. James, how impossible is it not to admire the courage, which in pursuit of a noble object, could lead him to disregard contempt, smile at poverty, brave danger, and peril life itself, if so he “might win “Christ<sup>2</sup>!” No consideration of personal loss or hazard could deter him from his purpose. He unshrinkingly followed the despised Nazarene unto persecution and even death. “Well done, good “and faithful servant!” Happy for us, when we imitate what we admire! Nor must any man suppose that such imitation is no longer requisite. What, if in this Christian land we are not called to forsake a father and *so* follow Christ? we are called

<sup>1</sup> It is observable that these three apostles continued most highly favoured by our Lord. They were selected to attend him when he was transfigured. John was the beloved disciple in life, and the friend to whom the dying Saviour bequeathed the care of his sorrowing Mother. Peter was the accepted penitent, the chosen pastor, the rock of the Church of Christ. Refer to page 406 and 407, where in the text of the former of these pages, and in the note appended to the latter of them, a reason is stated, explanatory of our Saviour’s especial affection for Peter.

<sup>2</sup> Philipp. iii. 8.

to forsake what is often as dear to us, and which we naturally follow with unchecked ardour—even “the devices and desires of our own hearts.” *These* devices, and *these* desires, do too often themselves either constitute the *wicked world* of which in baptism we vow our renunciation, or they bid welcome the tempter, when he offers the lust of the eye, or the pride of life; the fascinations of pleasure, or the deeper gratifications of revenge. The Collect therefore most justly directs us to pray to our “everlasting God,” that *as* the “holy Apostle St. James, leaving his father, and all that he had, followed Jesus Christ; so, forsaking all worldly and carnal affections, *we* may be evermore ready to follow his holy commandments, through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Suppose, then, that a sense of wrong call thee to revenge thyself upon an enemy, and thine own heart prompt thee to obey the call—hearken *not*: *forsake thine own way*, and *follow Him*, who bids thee “love thine enemy,” and “bless them who curse thee.” Does pleasure allure thee? No man can live faithful to God, who is a slave to pleasure. Be thou as ready to forsake the pleasure which would keep thee from God, as St. James was ready to leave his Father, and all that he had, when called to follow Christ. Indeed, on every occasion, when your inclination leads you one way, and your conscience another; when the voice of duty, and the suggestions of feeling are at variance; when the word of God directs you to a path, from which your heart would distract you; you are to act as St. James did, when the voice of Christ called him



from his worldly gain to spiritual toil—"without delay be *thou* also *obedient*." Follow conscience, not inclination; follow strict duty, not vague feeling; follow the path of holiness, and pray for grace to conquer the will which would entice you from it. The call of *duty* is the call of *Christ*<sup>1</sup>. He who spake to St. James in person, speaks to you by the word of his Gospel: and the unceasing call of that Gospel is—"If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me<sup>2</sup>." If you prove yourself sincere in that service which is perfect freedom, you will find its yoke easy, its burden light. You will find that the end thereof is peace and joy; that it ensures a peace, which the world can neither give, nor take away; and prepares for you a joy, which worlds could not purchase. Nay, when worlds themselves shall have perished, the faithful followers of Christ—all their trials ended, all their self-denial rewarded, and all their faculties enlarged to comprehend that God, in whose love every affection will be centered—shall spring to life eternal, and shine like stars for ever in the kingdom of glory.

<sup>1</sup> Matth. xix. 29. "And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life."

Refer to a note upon this passage in page 30.

<sup>2</sup> Matth. xvi. 24—26. "Then said Jesus unto his disciples, if any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

## 80. ST. BARTHOLOMEW THE APOSTLE.

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THIS Apostle, like the rest of the Apostles, was a Galilean.

St. John speaks of him under the name of Nathaniel ; whilst the other Evangelists call him by the name of Bartholomew ; or *son of Tholmai* : the Syriac word *bar* meaning *son*. Thus Simon is called *Bar-Jonas*, or son of Jonas.

Bartholomew was eminent for his labours among the Heathen, and extended his preaching even to India, whither he took the Gospel of St. Matthew, and left it. He proclaimed the Gospel in Phrygia also and Lycaonia. He thence journeyed through Armenia into Albania ; where, finding that the inhabitants were deeply sunk in idolatry, he so powerfully proclaimed to them their sin, and so boldly denounced against them its punishment, that they accused him as a teacher of false gods, and procured a sentence of condemnation against him.

He died a dreadful death ; being flead alive, and crucified with his head downwards.

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*O ALMIGHTY and everlasting God, who didst give to thine Apostle Bartholomew, grace, truly to believe and to preach thy word ; grant, we beseech thee, unto thy Church, to love that word which he believed, and both to preach and receive the same, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

IT is with our duties in religion, as with our duties in the world. The work to which we are indifferent, or from which we are averse, may be toiled through ; yet it will not only want the grace which adorns our performance of an action in which our heart is engaged, but its end must be incomplete and unsatisfactory. So if we be indifferent to the

work of our salvation—lukewarm in our religious duties—we shall find in the awful day of final reckoning, that our labour, though concluded, will not only fail of approbation, but end in misery.

Hence, the petitions of our Collect are so ordered, that we first pray for grace “to *love* that word which “the Apostle believed”—and then proceed to pray, that “the Church of God may both *preach* and *re-ceive* the same.”

Wishing to impress upon the minds of his followers the absolute necessity for an inward principle of devoted love as the foundation of a holy obedience, Christ reminded the Pharisees that the God of Abraham did most solemnly urge it upon his chosen Israel, as the very *beginning* of that service, which is due from the creature to the Creator: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with *all* thy heart, “and with *all* thy soul, and with all thy mind. This “is the *first* and great commandment<sup>1</sup>.” Nor must we wonder at the high rank thus assigned to this as a primary duty. Even in social intercourse this principle it is, which making the selfish to become self-denying and generous, renders labour light; and peril welcome. Shall it less avail in our intercourse with God? Rather, let the love we bear to Him, pervade and influence our every thought and word and action. We shall *then* abhor that which He abhors; and depart from evil. We shall subdue our own will; and find our best happiness in doing *His*. When tempted to evil, either by the fraud and malice of our spiritual enemy, or by our fellow-

<sup>1</sup> Matth. xxii. 37, 38.

creatures, or our own deceitful hearts, we shall resist the temptation; and prefer *His* favour, whom we love. We shall rejoice even in afflictions, for *his* sake; and for the devoted love we bear to our Saviour, and our God, joyfully suffer with the martyr's fortitude, whatever of self-denial or self-control, duty may require from us.

No less powerful a principle, than this love to God, could for so many *past* ages have supported the Church, under the divine blessing, in its arduous work of preaching the cross of Christ, against the prejudices of some, the indifference of others, and the various obstacles by which ignorance and infidelity, "false doctrine, heresy, and schism," have from time to time opposed "the word," and arrayed themselves against its progress.

The *same* principle is *now* required to support both the ministers who preach the word, and the people who receive it.

In these our days, as in times of old, difficulties will occur to the preachers of the Gospel of Christ. And such difficulties vary with the changing habits of mankind, and their different degrees of social advancement. In our own country, there is indeed rapid advance in knowledge of every kind: but increase even of religious knowledge is not followed by a proportionate increase of religious practice. Christians by profession, men know their duty, but neglect it. Hence, the object of preaching *now*, is not so much to inform, as to improve. Hence too, the severer and peculiar difficulties of the ministerial office in these days of light: for it will ever be a harder task to improve the heart, than to inform the

mind. Be our difficulties however whatever they may, we are not discouraged. Though we know and confess that success can come from *Him* alone, who is Lord equally of the spiritual and natural world, we dare not neglect our work. Like the husbandman, we plough and sow, and cultivate the soil—but leave the issue to God. His Spirit can quicken even the dead. Above all, we labour perseveringly, even when to us our labour seems vain, because we delight to do our Father's will. We love his *work*, because we love *HIM*<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> If it be important for *ministers* to feel the necessity of *earnestness* and *perseverance* in their labours; it is not less important for their *people* to understand the reasonable *grounds* on which such a feeling rests; I therefore refer my reader to the third and thirty-third chapters of Ezekiel. The respective duties of minister and people are there stated in a manner so full and explicit, that lofty as are the sentiments of the prophet, and noble his expression of them, the instruction they convey is clear.

We learn, from the Scripture referred to, that a minister is “made a watchman” to the Church and household of God—to look out for, and give notice of the approach of evil. “O Son of man,” saith the Lord, “I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel.” The prophet explains fully the nature of the watchman's duty; shews the responsibility of those who are called to it; and plainly states the conditions on which they may hope honourably to discharge themselves of their high and awful responsibility. “If the watchman warn the wicked of his way to turn him from it, he delivers his own soul:” but if he “does *not* speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity: but his blood will be required at the watchman's hand”—deeply impressed with this fearful view of duty, ministers cannot relax their anxious labour, while sin and error reign. Hence, when they declare *pardon* to the *penitent*, and *wrath* upon the *impenitent*; *life* to him who turneth from his evil, and *death* to him who turneth *not* from his evil way—their warnings are bold; their exhortations earnest. And since only by *thus* “speaking to warn,” they can



Equally if not more necessary it is, that this love to God should be an abiding feeling in those who are to *receive* the word. Hampered as they too often are by the world—daily entangled with its cares,

“deliver their own souls” and be “free from the blood of others,” who shall wonder at their *earnestness*?

The minister of the word of God labours also with *perseverance*. True it is that severe and varied trials await him. Some men heed not the Being, whose servant he is. For *them* he can only pray. Others profess to honour the master, but despise the servant; and despising the servant, they despise his warning. Wherefore it follows, that even of those who in their hearts perhaps acknowledge the divine commission by which he is authorized, and feel the unanswerable truths he heralds; many are too proud, at his hands to receive these truths, or on the authority of his commission to acquiesce in his ministration. But these trials are not unexpected by him. It is no surprise to him, if he labour long, where no success appears; if he repeat warnings often unheeded, threatenings often mocked at, promises often despised. God himself hath prepared him to expect, that thus it will be in the Church for ever.—What meaneth else that emphatic command to *warn* the “people, whether *they will hear*, or whether *they will forbear*?” The inference is plain—the minister of the Word is not to be discouraged by any apparent want of success: the despitefulness of the proud is not to daunt him, the contradiction of sinners not to weary him, nor the overflowings of the ungodly to make him afraid. In doubt and danger, in fear and sorrow, in faintness and weariness and watchfulness, his motive to *perseverance* is at hand—he hears the voice of God directing him *onward* in his work, “whether men will *hear*, or whether they will *forbear*.”

Thus *earnest* and *persevering*, the minister of the Gospel still toils. His duty is to watch the approach of evil, and *warn* those whom it threatens to destroy: but having so watched and so warned, he leaves the event to God. His efforts may not always be successful in leading others from destruction—yet his labour is not in vain—“He delivers his own soul.” Reader! Heed thou the watchman’s voice; and prepare to meet thy God! that thou also mayest find deliverance through *that* name—Jesus Christ, the righteous—by which *alone*, either ministers or people can save their souls alive.

allured by its pleasures, or alarmed by its difficulties—they need a counteracting influence of no moderate power, ere they can so far withdraw themselves from things present, as to heed tidings of the invisible things of God, and the concerns of futurity. This influence can flow only from an ardent love of God. Whoso “*loveth* the Lord his God with all his heart, “with all his soul, and with all his mind,” receives the word, as a gracious and blessed gift; in the right use of which his best affections are to be engaged, and which he really believes to be “the pearl of great price”—rich, to purchase even “life eternal<sup>1</sup>.” His whole heart being devoted to God, he receives the gift gratefully with all its conditions; all its exactions. He considers no conditions severe, which accompany such a gift; and feels no duty hard, which those conditions exact. Thus influenced by love towards God, he submits every faculty, every power of mind and body, to the regulation, and guidance of his word, as a gracious and sanctifying gift through Christ. Impressed with this sense of gratitude and duty, he endeavours by a holy life to adorn a holy profession; so proving to his fellow Christians, that with heart, and soul, and mind, firmly believing the word, gladly receiving it, and sincerely loving the same, he views it, as at once the ground of his fears, and the foundation of his hopes; as the light, which, whilst it shews him the nature and danger of sin, also points out the remedy; as the only way, which leadeth him, in life, to the throne of grace; and which hereafter can lead him to glory.

<sup>1</sup> John v. 39.

Happy the people and their minister, when thus knit together in the bond of peace they severally *love the word*, which the one *preaches*, and the other *receives*! Abounding in the work of the Lord, in which their labour cannot be in vain<sup>1</sup>, they are fellow labourers in a good work, and have “their conversation in heaven”<sup>2</sup>. Such an union of souls is the beginning of that everlasting union, which will unite the faithful not only with the communion of saints, and the innumerable company of angels, but with God and his Christ—by that Holy Spirit, the Comforter, which in the Christian covenant of reconciliation, reneweth us as sons of God and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven.

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## 81. ST. MATTHEW THE APOSTLE.

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ST. MATTHEW, called also Levi, was son of Alpheus. He was a *Publican*; an appropriate name given to those whose office was to gather the *public taxes*, which the Jews, as the people of a Roman province, were compelled to pay to their conquerors.

The *chief* tax-gatherers were *Romans*; but they let out the taxes to such *Jews* as would *hire* them. Hence arose hatred against the publicans: for the Jews who had hired these taxes, often extorted to the utmost from their brethren, in order that, after paying the appointed sum to the Romans, something might remain to themselves.

Our Apostle was appointed to take toll of the several passengers who sailed on the sea of Galilee.

The time and manner of his death are uncertain; but there is reason to suppose that he did not die by martyrdom.

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 58.

<sup>2</sup> Phil. iii. 20.

*ALMIGHTY God, who by thy blessed Son, didst call Matth w from the receipt of custom, to be an Apostle and Evangelist ; grant us grace to forsake all covetous desires and inordinate love of riches, and to follow the same thy Son Jesus Christ, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Ghost, one God, world without end. Amen.*

As St. Matthew was well worthy from his disinterestedness to be called to the apostleship, so from the full knowledge which local circumstances gave him of the character of Christ, he was peculiarly calculated to record his history, and was therefore properly chosen an Evangelist.

He dwelt at Capernaum<sup>1</sup>. The duties, however, of his station called him daily to the sea of Galilee, which was then more especially the scene of our blessed Lord's discourses and miracles. There he not only witnessed many of the mighty works of Jesus, but, from the nature of his office, held such continual converse with men of all characters, who paid tribute as they passed from shore to shore, that he must also have heard every variety of opinion respecting the great Prophet ; from the zealous testimony of the devoted and glad disciple, to the prejudiced reports of the proud and heartless Pharisee. Being of a contemplative spirit, he would seem to have pondered in his heart all things which he saw and heard ; till fully convinced that the Being who did these mighty works could be none other

<sup>1</sup> Our Lord, during the time of his ministry, dwelt much at Capernaum ; a city built upon the shore of the sea of Galilee—or lake of Gennesareth, as it was sometimes called.

than the Son of God, he resolved to take the first opportunity of becoming his disciple. This opportunity was soon offered to him. God often *prevents* our petitions for grace, and answers the prayer of the heart, even before the lips can have uttered it. “And after these things Jesus went forth, and saw “a publican named Levi, sitting at the receipt of “custom: and he said unto him, follow me. And “he left all, rose up, and followed him<sup>1</sup>.” What a noble sacrifice! How worthy our admiration! how instructive for our imitation! Enjoying a lucrative office—sitting at the receipt of custom in the very act of gain, and surrounded by every object that might enslave him to the world—he instantly leaves all his present advantages, foregoes his prospects of

<sup>1</sup> Luke v. 27, 28. The whole narrative is given by St. Luke in his usual vivid style. Not only are the actors in the scene brought before us, but their actions and very manners are pourtrayed. We behold the publican, one minute sitting at the receipt of custom, surrounded with all the bustle of worldly gain; in the next, we see him spurning those very advantages, and regarding the world as no longer worthy his attention, when called to the resignation of it by the service of God.

St. Matthew shewed also, that though the *act* of his following Christ was *sudden*, the *principle* upon which he acted was *not* suddenly adopted; but the result of deep conviction, and a deliberate judgment. In proof of his sincerity, he was so far from seeking retirement upon his voluntary change of condition, that he made a great feast. “And Levi made a great feast in his own house; and “there was a great company of publicans, and of others, that sat “down with them.” Luke v. 29.

The Apostle might have adopted the joyful and expressive language of Isaiah: “And it shall be said in that day, lo, this is our “God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the “Lord; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his “salvation.” Isaiah xxv. 9.



future advancement, subjects himself to the wonder and contempt of his nation, and enters upon a course of privation and danger, that he may follow the despised and lowly Jesus. So, O God, even so mayest thou prepare *our* hearts to obey the call of thy Holy Spirit, which ever inviteth us through the Gospel to follow the same Saviour, to rise superior to the world, and live unto God!

Suppose then, that God so prospers you, that you become rich in this world's goods—consider prosperity as a blessing, for the right use of which you will be called hereafter to render strict account. If riches increase, receive them with gratitude to the giver, and apply them to his glory, by applying them to the benefit of your fellow-creatures; but “set not your heart upon them<sup>1</sup>.” An inordinate love of riches leads after it a long train of evils—hardens the heart, deadens it to the voice of misfortune, and clothes it with an utter and degrading selfishness. It is this *effect* of riches, *not* the *possession* of them, which makes it “hard for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven.” To make a right use of riches, is to confer blessing upon our fellow-creatures by faithfully dispensing the bounty of God. To make a wrong use of riches—to love them, and to trust in them—is to love the creature more than the Creator, and to hazard the welfare of our souls. Our Blessed Lord draws this distinction with equal clearness and beauty. His disciples being astonished at his warning, “How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!”—He con-

<sup>1</sup> Psalm lxii. 10.

descends to explain his own words, and “*answereth again*, and saith unto them, Children, how hard is it for them that *trust* in riches to enter into the kingdom of God<sup>1</sup>.”

On the other hand, if, amid the changes and chances of the world, your riches make to themselves wings and flee away; if you become poor and distressed by some afflictive dispensation—consider such a change of circumstances as an opportunity which requires especial exercise of faith in the providence of God, and as a call readily to leave all that you have, without murmur, or repining, and so to follow Christ. There is not a nobler character than the faithful servant of God, who—when fallen from affluence to poverty—still holds fast his faith, still stays himself upon his God, and knowing that *He*, who ordereth riches or poverty, doeth all things well, looks up without fear to his heavenly Father, as one by whom the hairs of our head are numbered, who correcteth whom he loveth, and who would withdraw us from the love of the world only to cherish in us more ardent aspirations after that better country; where not only the wicked cease from troubling, but where the weary are at rest—a rest, which nothing can disturb, and which yet remaineth for the people of God.

Reader! when the world entices you one way, and the Spirit of God calls you another, commune with your heart—and consider, “What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose

<sup>1</sup> Mark x. 23, 24.

“his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul<sup>1</sup>?”

<sup>1</sup> Such is the impressive and unanswerable appeal of Omniscience to self-love and self-interest! As we meditate upon the wonderful ordering of God, which thus makes it possible even for love of self to be turned to good account, how can we forbear expressing our admiration and gratitude! O! the depth of the riches both of his wisdom and his goodness! In his *wisdom* he searcheth the most secret recesses of our hearts, and there seeth self-love to predominate: in his *goodness* he compassionates even our infirmities, and turns the predominant feeling to our good. He calls it in aid, to deter us from a sinful course and win us to holiness—for self-love shrinks from never-ending misery, which is the appointed punishment of sin; and self-interest loves reward, which is the assured though *unmerited* recompense of holiness.

Upon this principle we are directed to weigh the gain, severally offered by this world and the next. Suppose for a moment, that a vicious man be sometimes prosperous—his prosperity is uncertain, and *short* as his fleeting life; but his *punishment* is sure, and for *ever*. Suppose a good man be tried with many sorrows—his trials all close, when his life closes; but his joyful recompense is *eternal*. Balance the two gains! Which is the better worth—the short and deceitful pleasures of sin for a season, with a certainty of their merited punishment for ever; or the godly sorrows of repentance, and such trials as may accompany a holy course, with a prospect of higher advantages than the closest self-interest ever dreamed of, and a hope of more extended happiness, than the most flattering self-love under its brightest delusion ever ventured to anticipate!

Whoso then would best consult his true interest, and most fully gratify his self-love, *he* will lead a holy life; sincere in the performance of every duty—penitent, faithful, and obedient before God; true and just in his dealings with men. He will be wise enough to feel, that self-denial and sorrow for a short time here, with the prospect of eternal happiness hereafter, is better worth than fancied and short-lived pleasures in this world, with the certainty of eternal misery in the next; and that *whatever* a wicked man may gain—even if he gain the whole of this perishing world—he must at last be the *loser*; for he will lose his *immortal* soul.

## 82. ST. MICHAEL AND ALL ANGELS.

*O EVERLASTING GOD, who hast ordained and constituted the services of Angels and men in a wonderful order ; mercifully grant, that as thy holy Angels always do thee service in heaven ; so by thy appointment they may succour and defend us on earth, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

IF Revelation had been silent respecting angels, reason would be a sufficient ground for our believing in their existence<sup>1</sup>. We observe, in the scale of animal beings, a regular gradation of living creatures inferior to us. It is therefore but reasonable to believe, that in the scale of intelligences also, there is a gradation of beings superior to us. But it is from the Holy Scriptures that we derive whatever knowledge on the subject can be made practical, either for warning or consolation. On their authority alone do we know that appropriate duties are assigned to the angels, and that “ their services are ordained “ and constituted in a wonderful order by the everlasting God.”

In the Old Testament their visible agency in

<sup>1</sup> *Angels are heavenly messengers*—created intelligences—ordained by the Creator to execute his will both in heaven and earth. For this purpose they stand continually before him, and execute their office by the power which is delegated to them.

St. Michael is called the Archangel, or Chief Prince, because he especially presided over the people of God, to confer benefits upon them.

guarding the faithful from danger, and in bringing destruction upon the wicked, is distinctly stated; and many instances thereof are recorded<sup>1</sup>. The record is of practical utility. Occasional instances of such agency on behalf of the good, prove to us, in a most striking manner, the watchful and superintending care of a merciful Providence, “whose  
“angel encampeth round about them that fear him,  
“and delivereth them<sup>2</sup> ;” whilst the instances of *immediate* judgment upon impenitent sinners, awfully warn us, that as “the eyes of the Lord are over the  
“righteous,” so surely “the face of the Lord is  
“against them that do evil<sup>3</sup>.”

In the New Testament also we find the service and ministration of angels employed; especially on the more important occasions which marked the sojourn among us of the Son of God. His incarnation was announced by an angel, and his birth hailed by the heavenly host in a song of gratulation to the watchful shepherds<sup>4</sup>. After he had successfully resisted the various temptations brought against him by the devil in the wilderness, “angels came and  
“ministered unto him<sup>5</sup>. During his agony in the

<sup>1</sup> The same angels who destroyed the reprobate inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah, preserved Lot and his family. Gen. xix. 12, 13.

<sup>2</sup> Psalm xxxiv. 7.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Pet. iii. 12.

<sup>4</sup> Luke i. 26—29. ii. 10, &c.

<sup>5</sup> The Son of God did indeed give proof that he had taken upon himself an inferior nature, when, as man, he deigned to receive consolation and support from the ministration of angels; who though so far higher than humanity, that they are spirits able “to discern  
“good and bad,” 2 Sam. xiv. 17, are yet worshippers of that Jesus to whom they ministered, Heb. i. 6, and considered themselves but as fellow-servants with the adopted sons of God, Rev. xxii. 9. Our



garden, "there appeared an angel unto him from "heaven strengthening him<sup>1</sup>." At the resurrection,

Lord, however, thus fulfilled the prophecy of David: Psalm viii. 5. to which St. Paul refers Heb. ii. 9. "We see Jesus who *was made a "little lower than the angels*, for the suffering of death, crowned "with glory and honour."

<sup>1</sup> The most affecting passage in the Gospel History, is that which describes the agony of our blessed Saviour. It is true, that in every scene of his life, we view him with wonder, and love, and gratitude.

Throughout his *temptation* in the wilderness was severity of trial. But he was then evidently fully equal to the struggle, though an arduous one. His mind was fixed steadily. Able to confute the sophistry of the wise one, and skilful to expose all his subtleties, he shrunk not from the contest; but met it with the calmest courage, and persevered in it with the most unshaken fortitude.

In his *death* we contemplate him with the most awful reverence. A sublimity of circumstances and of feeling pervades the scene of his crucifixion, which might almost subdue our minds and overpower us with the conscious reflection, that for *our sins* "the Son of "God did suffer." Yet death was to Him glory, and to man salvation. When he gave up the ghost, his toil was over; His warfare accomplished; His kingdom established; and a lost world redeemed. Our sorrow therefore is mingled with joy.

But when we view him in his *Agony*—amazement and terror, compassion and gratitude, alternately prevail in us. We *then* are compelled to confess, "No sorrow was like unto his sorrow," Lam. i. 12. He exhibits an inward shrinking from the appointed trial—an apprehension, an alarm, a bewildering,—which is not contemplated without the most painful and absorbing interest. It is a mighty struggle between the infirmities of humanity and the sinlessness of Divinity; and we pause in fearful expectation whether the cup shall pass untasted, and man perish,—or the very dregs of it be drained, and salvation be accomplished for a lost world. In the midst of this racking distress, the benevolent Master has regard to the welfare of his servants; and, with a noble disinterestedness, which nothing but his own heavenly spirit could inspire, he subdues the agonized feelings under which he is himself labouring, that he may exhort *them* "to pray, lest *they* also enter into temptation"—Luke xxii. 39—46. Himself almost overwhelmed by the weight of his trial, He would

two angels affirmed that he was risen, and spake comfort to the weeping Mary<sup>1</sup>. A heavenly host accompanied him, as he ascended into glory; and he himself intimates that the angelic armies of the living God, countless as the stars for multitude, are arrayed, and prepared to do his will. “Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels<sup>2</sup>.”

In these our days, we are *not* to expect the *visible* agency of the host of heaven. But our blessed Saviour has very clearly signified to us that angels are still concerned for our welfare—still interested in our salvation. “There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth<sup>3</sup>.” They are therefore conscious of our proceedings, though we see them not; they are invisible witnesses, as we run the race set before us. With the spirits of the just made perfect—with the spirits perhaps of those we loved and honoured in this

fain spare them the burthen of it. Surely, “the love of Christ passeth knowledge!”

<sup>1</sup> John xx. 12.

<sup>2</sup> Matth. xxvi. 53. The military legion consisted of about five thousand men. But our blessed Saviour’s application of the term upon this occasion, shews us that he intended to express, *not only* twelve legions, but a vast *indefinite* number of angels—as many as any necessity, which might arise, could require. This mode of expression is not unusual in Scripture, and is frequently adopted by Christ himself; as when in reply to one who asked whether he should forgive his brother *seven* times—Jesus answered and said unto him, I say not unto thee until seven times, but until *seventy times seven*,—not even *then* implying any limit to forgiveness; but shewing, that however often offence be given, so often should forgiveness be granted.

<sup>3</sup> Luke xv. 10.

lower world<sup>1</sup>—they mourn when we faint in our course, they rejoice when we run it with patience ;

<sup>1</sup> Since the former edition of this book was published, the *Journal* of the late lamented Bishop Heber has been presented to the public. The *Journal* contains several passages, one of which, from the third volume, I subjoin, in which, with his usual tenderness of thought, and felicity of expression, the writer has freely declared his own opinion upon a subject so closely interwoven with our highest and holiest feelings. In the earnest endeavour to console a friend upon the death of her brother, he proceeds thus : “ I know not, (indeed “ who can know ?) whether the spirits of the just are ever permitted “ to hover over those whom they have loved most tenderly ; but if “ such permission be given—and who can say it is impossible ?— “ then it must greatly increase your brother’s present happiness, and “ greatly diminish that painful sense of separation which even the “ souls of the righteous may be supposed to feel, if he sees you resigned, patient, hopeful ; trusting in that cross, which was his “ refuge in the hour of dread, and that good Providence, to whose “ care he fervently and faithfully committed you.”

It may not be useless to remind the reader, that this view of the subject is fully borne out by the deep interest, and affecting solicitude, with which, in the parable of Dives and Lazarus, the former is represented as praying “ Father Abraham,” to send Lazarus to his five surviving brethren, “ to testify unto them—lest they also come “ into this place of torment.” How touching the tender loving-kindness of our Redeemer ! Though faith must ever be the main-spring of action, to those who would overcome the world, yet, as the parable, with sufficient clearness, teaches us, we are mercifully permitted to call in aid considerations in themselves inferior ; for the Son of Man, knowing as God, what was in man, knew how powerful an ally, even to Christian virtue, might be the love of kindred and of friends.

Let survivors consider this. Let them remember that the surest proof they can give of their affection to the memory of the dead, is to cherish a holy faith, and a holy practice ; to be constant in prayer, and the performance of all other religious duties, public and private ; to subdue evil passions ; to correct bad tempers ; to be honest, and just, and true in all their dealings ; to be faithful in that state of life to which it may have pleased God to call them ; and to encourage themselves in perseverance by the consideration that they may pos-

and it is surely some consolation to think that by the appointment of the Almighty, they are effectually, though invisibly, present for our good by night and by day, warding off dangers which we see not, bringing to us comforts which we expect not, then most strengthening us in our spiritual way, when we feel ourselves the weakest, and reserving the clearest manifestation of their holy influence for our most trying hour—the hour of death<sup>1</sup>. Hence the Col-

sibly be adding to the happiness of the spirits of the just, at the very time that, though with fear and trembling, yet with faith and patience, they are working out their own salvation.

<sup>1</sup> The death-bed of the righteous seems oftentimes to have a more than mortal anticipation of the glorious company of angels, and the bright glories of the world of spirits. Indeed, since the good Lazarus is represented as “carried by *Angels*” to his rest, the inference is unavoidable—that angels attend the dying—though like other spirits, themselves invisible, their presence is evidenced by the strength and comfort they convey in that hour of awe; not by any palpable and visible ministration.

The thought is, happily, neither vain nor presumptuous. Indeed, whilst it is not to be slightly regarded by any, it is calculated to give consolation to those more especially, who look forward to the close of life with terror. I speak not of the wicked; *they*, of course, can never think of death without horror and dismay; *for*, after death comes the judgment. I here speak of the good. And there are many good men, who, though habitually living under the strongest impression of final salvation to the penitent through the merits of a crucified and risen Saviour, are yet appalled at the prospect of dissolution. Ever agitated by the nearness of futurity, they await its approach with dejection. To feel the blow, which is to separate soul and body; to close every sense upon this world, and to pass to the world of spirits—a world unexplored by mortality, and veiled in all the awfulness of holy mystery—*this* is a view of death, which the most sincere Christian not unfrequently contemplates with a confusing and undefined dread, above the noblest powers of reason to conquer. *Faith* however may mitigate, if not control, what reason cannot conquer. When the word of God opens to our view all his rich promises

lect justly and beautifully frames our prayer, that by the appointment of the everlasting God, his “holy angels, whose services, like those of men, are “by Him constituted in a wonderful order, may for “Jesus Christ’s sake succour and defend us on “earth, as they always do Him service in heaven.”

After all, *this* is the surest ground of consolation to us, that our God is, *Himself*, equally present at all times, and in all places; the Lord of angels, and of men. As the wicked cannot fly from his presence, the righteous need not fear his absence. The wicked cannot but know that He, who by his angel smote Herod in his crimes, lives, though he be invisible—

of spiritual health to the sick and fainting soul, strength to the weak, peace to the afflicted, life to the dead; we see that the relief promised, is to be in proportion to our necessities; “*As is thy day, so “shall be thy strength*”—the measure of this assistance knowing no other limit than our necessity; but *not* exceeding *that*. Therefore divine consolations are to be looked for by the Christian now, as manna by the Israelites of old; who day by day found enough, and nothing over: nothing to spare, yet nothing wanting. Hence, when we dread any *future* trial, because the spiritual comfort we may have hitherto experienced appears unequal to the sorrow we anticipate, it were well to call to mind *past* trials and *past* support; how the one was so mercifully proportioned to the other, that patience, resignation, and hope failed us not. There was *strength* for our *day*. Thus, remembrance of the past will strengthen our hope for the *future*. Surely, the gracious Being, who has never yet forsaken us under any sorrow, will not forsake us, when our need is the greatest—will not withdraw the ministration of his angels, when they might best minister to our consolation; but will rather so ordain their services, that as by his appointment they have succoured and defended us under the most arduous circumstances of life, they may support us, if necessary, in the still more awful circumstances of our dissolution; hail with gladness our freedom from mortality; and rejoice that by the death of the righteous, one more happy soul is added to the glorious Host of Heaven.—See also Page 276 note.



lives, “the same, yesterday, to-day, and for ever,” to avenge him of his enemies<sup>1</sup>. The righteous may rest assured, that though evil threaten, it cannot harm them; for God will not fail his truth. He will ordain that by the ministration of his invisible agents, “all things shall work together for good to “them that love and fear him:” and will so regulate the several dispensations of his providence, that their great end shall be accomplished—even our salvation. Therefore let us be grateful to God, as for all his mercies, so especially for the redemption of the world by his Son Jesus Christ, and “with “angels and arch-angels, and all the company of “heaven, laud and magnify his holy name; through “the same Jesus Christ our Lord.”

<sup>1</sup> Acts xii. 22, 23. “And the people gave a shout, saying, it is “the voice of a God, and not of a man. And immediately *the Angel “of the Lord* smote him, because he gave not God the glory; and “he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost”—conspicuous as well in punishment as in crime. Such was the dreadful end of Herod Agrippa, King of Judæa, in the year 44; after a reign of seven years.

### 83. ST. LUKE THE EVANGELIST.

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ST. LUKE was a physician, born at Antioch, the capital of Syria; a city remarkable for its riches, and the fame it acquired as the residence of learned men. Having improved himself by travelling into Greece and Egypt, and afterwards practised as a physician in a family of consequence at Rome, he returned to Antioch.

He was not an Apostle, but was long a companion of St. Paul, and probably one of the seventy disciples.

He wrote the Acts of the Apostles, and the Gospel known by his name. Few particulars are left us respecting his life, nor is there any certain record of his death; but he is supposed *not* to have died by martyrdom.

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*ALMIGHTY GOD, who calledst Luke the physician, whose praise is in the Gospel, to be an Evangelist, and physician of the soul; may it please thee, that by the wholesome medicines of the doctrine delivered by him, all the diseases of our souls may be healed, through the merits of thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

OUR Collect particularizes St. Luke as having his "praise in the Gospel." The expression is adopted from St. Paul, who speaks of him as "the brother whose praise is in the Gospel, throughout all the Churches<sup>1</sup>." The praise is well applied. For though, like St. Mark<sup>2</sup>, he was not an apostle, yet what he wrote is of apostolic authority, having had the approbation of St. Paul; with whom he journeyed

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. viii. 18.

<sup>2</sup> See the Collect for St. Mark.

often, and with whom, in all apostolic duties, he was a zealous and laudable coadjutor<sup>1</sup>. High praise attaches to him as an historian also. Well educated during early life at Antioch, and his mind further enlarged in after years, by a long sojourn among the polished sons of Greece and Rome, he brought to his task qualifications of no ordinary stamp. Whilst the truths delivered by all the Evangelists are of equal authority—containing the words of eternal life, and conveying the lively oracles of God by the inspiration of his Spirit—the style and manner in which they are delivered, vary with the character and powers of the several writers. St. Luke is remarkable for a powerful and animated style. In his descriptions, indeed, he so vividly represents to us the different scenes wherein our Lord delivered his heavenly precepts, and displayed his divine power: and he delineates so accurately the characters of the

<sup>1</sup> The fact of St. Luke's Gospel having been approved by St. Paul is amply confirmed by Origen, and Irenæus; two of the fathers of the Church.

Origen, of Alexandria, flourished in the beginning of the third century, and so early as in the year 204 was appointed a public teacher of the Gospel.

Irenæus lived before Origen, and derived his knowledge from Polycarp, who was a disciple of St. John the Evangelist. The testimony therefore of Irenæus is scarcely removed from the testimony of an Apostle, and his record may well therefore be received by us as of apostolic authority. He succeeded Pothinus, as Bishop of Lyons.

Polycarp, at a very advanced age, sealed his faith by martyrdom; and was burned alive at Smyrna, under the government of Philip the Asiarch—Asia Minor being at that time part of the Roman empire. This event, according to Archbishop Wake's calculation, took place on the 26th day of March, in the year of Christ 147.

persons engaged, that as the cold-hearted disregard the doctrines of the Saviour or the generous receive them, as the scorner rejects or the humble adore Him, our whole attention is absorbed: we seem carried by the writer into the very scenes and circumstances he describes, and to witness the actions and manners of the persons whom he portrays. *Thus* likewise St. Luke's "praise is in the Gospel:" for what higher commendation can be given to the powers of a writer, than the rivetted attention of the reader?

Our Evangelist having been a physician, we are naturally led to consider his spiritual ministry as a ministration of medicine to the soul<sup>1</sup>. Christ himself frequently used the same figure of speech; and when he healed all manner of *bodily* sickness and disease, took occasion to signify that one intention in such merciful healing, was to shew men, that by the exercise of the same power he could heal the diseases of the *soul*—could pardon the penitent, and raise the dead in sin to a life of holiness and peace. "Whether is easier to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Rise up and walk<sup>2</sup>?"

<sup>1</sup> When our Lord called Peter and his partners, who were *fishermen*, to preach the Gospel, he made a direct reference to their temporal pursuits. "I will make you," said he, "*fishers of men*." Matth. iv. 19.

<sup>2</sup> Luke v. 23. The question does not imply any doubt. It is put, as defying reply. The power which could effect the one cure, could effect the other; and God alone could effect either: *He* therefore who should effect *both*, must be none other than *God*. To convince the Jews of this, our Lord first healed the soul; and, in proof of his own divine power, and of the reality and efficacy of it when applied to the soul, he then healed the body. "But that ye may

The whole of the Gospel dispensation may be expressed by the same figurative language. When the conscience-stricken soul is sick and weak under the burden and misery of sin, fainting with sorrow at the past, and infirm of purpose as to the future—wavering in its Faith and failing in its hope—the Gospel is a sure remedy: it directs the wounded conscience to *Jesus* Christ, as the gracious friend and physician, who “*healeth* the stroke of its wound,” and “giveth *medicine* to heal its sickness<sup>1</sup>.” It is, therefore, lamentable to see how little even professing Christians apply to the Holy Scriptures, in this view of them, as a medicine to heal their sickness. If my reader unhappily be of the number of those who do thus neglect the Gospel, his neglect must arise from this, that although, in the emphatic language of the prophet, “the whole head is sick and the whole heart faint<sup>2</sup>,” he does not *feel* his sickness. From so awful a state, let him

“know that the Son of Man hath power upon earth to forgive sins, he said unto the sick of the palsy, I say unto thee, arise, and take up thy couch, and go unto thine house. And immediately he arose before them, and took up that whereon he lay, and departed to his own house, glorifying God.”

1 The word itself—“*Jesus*” means a “*Healer*,” and is applied most appropriately to the Son of God; for it is by healing us of the wound of Sin, that he heals us of the sting of death. The title is also peculiarly appropriate, in reference to the particular figure of speech by which the Almighty was himself pleased to signify both the effect of sin upon the nature of man, and the efficacy of the remedy which he should appoint to counteract it. “The Lord God said unto the serpent,” “I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: it shall *bruise* thy head, and thou shalt *bruise* his heel.”

2 Isaiah i. 5.



awake ! he is in a sleep ; a torpor. A racking disease is at his heart, which, by its very force, sinks him into insensibility. “ They that be whole need “ not a physician, but they that are sick<sup>1</sup>. ” The soul must *feel* its sickness—must feel itself under the disease of *sin*—it will *then* apply the remedy. Nor will its application be vain. The raptures of the dying man, to whom the physician should unexpectedly give hopes of prolonged existence, are but feeble, compared to the joy of him, who, conscious that he needs a physician for his soul, applies the appointed remedy ; “ as in Adam all die, even “ *so in Christ shall all be made alive ;* ” “ alive “ unto God, through Jesus Christ.” None but the deeply penitent can tell the freshness of grateful joy which pervades *his* heart, who by uniting prayer for grace, with endeavours after holiness, finds himself well resolved, and strong to bring his good resolutions to good effect. Raised from a death of sin to a life of righteousness, his whole soul is poured out in gratitude to the great Healer of the nations ; and he breaks forth into Hezekiah’s fervent and affecting adoration ; “ the living, the living, *he*, O God, shall “ praise thee<sup>2</sup>. ”

It were well if the people, when they receive the Word as dispensed by the ministers of the Gospel, would as fairly exercise their reason in taking measures for the welfare of the soul, as they do when consulting for the welfare of the body. Let the Christian, under the pains of sickness, teach the wicked under the pain of sin. The Christian in his

<sup>1</sup> Matth. ix. 12.

<sup>2</sup> Isaiah xxxviii. 19.

heart believes, and confesses with all humility, that no power but that of the Almighty can raise him to health again—"I shall be restored again when it is good for me." Such is the language of faith. But in the fullest exercise of this laudable and happy faith, he does not neglect the appointed human means of re-establishing health; he applies to the physician, he takes remedies however unpalatable, and submits to pain however acute, because he wishes for health again. Wisely then let men receive the Word preached, as medicine to heal their spiritual sickness: and though the first appointed remedy be repentance—a medicine, bitter to the pride and self-will of man—let it be taken: though the subsequent self-denial required be painful—even as the cutting off a right hand—let it be submitted to. Life and death are before us. By nature, we are sick; we die. By grace, we live; we are healthful. The Gospel supplies medicine, and life—*that* Gospel, one record of which St. Luke has so faithfully preserved to us. May it therefore please Almighty God, "that by the wholesome medicines of the doctrine delivered by that Evangelist, all the diseases of our souls may be healed, through the merits of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord"—Amen—even so, O Father, for thy love and mercy's sake!

## 84. ST. SIMON AND ST. JUDE.

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ST. SIMON and St. Jude were two of the twelve Apostles, chosen by our Lord.

*Simon* was called *Zelotes*—a name indicative of the *zeal* which marked his character—to distinguish him from Simon Peter.

In like manner *Jude*, or Judas, the brother of James the Less, is known by the additional name of Thaddæus, or Lebbæus, to distinguish him from Judas Iscariot.

They preached the Gospel in various parts of Asia and Africa, and suffered martyrdom in Persia.

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*O ALMIGHTY GOD, who hast built thy Church upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the head corner-stone; grant us so to be joined together in unity of spirit, by thy doctrine, that we may be made an holy temple, acceptable unto thee, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

To restore fallen man to his original rank, by re-uniting him with God, was the end of our Saviour's mission. It was also the object of his affecting valedictory prayer, wherein he speaks of this restoration as comprehending a conformity to divine holiness here, and a consequent participation of divine glory hereafter<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> John xvii. 21—23. "That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that *they also may be one in us*: "that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory "which thou gavest me, I have given them; that *they may be one*,

This union is illustrated throughout Scripture by various comparisons. Our Collect speaks of it, under

“*even as we are one : I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one ; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.*”

Though the term “*one with us*,” that is, with God and Christ, has a definite meaning, and is fraught with definite blessing, its meaning is often perverted, and its blessing vaguely applied.

So frequent is a perverted application of this term, that a mere assumption of religious profession will sometimes lead men to fancy themselves united to the Deity. But however earnest we be in our profession of a religious faith, unless our life agree thereto, we cannot be of those who are united to God. If we act in a *worldly spirit*—avoiding, perhaps, open dishonesty, yet practising duplicity which no human eye can detect, or cunning which no human skill can reach—our spirit belies our profession ; we are not “*one with God* :” God is truth ; our life is a falsehood. So also something more than a pretension to religious feeling is required of us, when we claim an union with *Christ*. However devout our manner may be, however uniform our declaration of self-abasement, or strong our expression of zeal for the Saviour ; yet, if we admit anger into the *heart* ; if the *mind* be puffed up with self-righteousness, or the *secret* feelings of the soul be embittered by uncharitableness ; we cannot be “*one with Christ*,” who was perfect in meekness, in lowliness, in charity. We shall rather be like those whom Ignatius, in his address to the Ephesians, so faithfully described as “*most perniciously accustoming themselves to carry about the\* name (of Christ) in all deceitfulness ; but doing things unworthy of God, and imagining things altogether contrary to the doctrine of Christ.*”

Still since to be “*one with God and Christ*” is within our reach ; or it never would have been the object of our Saviour’s earnest and affecting prayer : it is right that we understand in what the union consists, and what is the blessing attached to it.

We are “*one with God*,” when our *Spirit*—our thoughts and feelings—are in conformity with *His* character ; holy, pure, peaceful. We are “*one with Christ*” when our *actions* so conform to his laws,

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\* “*The name*”—emphatically “*that name, which is above every name.*”

the apostolic figure of a Temple<sup>1</sup>—a building raised to the honour of God. From this illustration we learn that the several parts of a Christian's conduct should be in strict conformity, both outwardly and inwardly, with the character of Jesus Christ, who is represented by the Evangelical Prophet, as being what a chief corner-stone is to a building, at once the cause of its stability, and the pattern of its general character<sup>2</sup>.

The first care, however, of a prudent builder is to lay a good foundation. Hence the Christian does not build his hope upon his own righteousness—the sandy foundation of good works—but upon the grace of God, as revealed in the Gospel; “For other  
“ foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which

that we are evidently influenced by a holy motive, and guided by a holy will. He, when in the flesh, proved his own union with the Father, by being “the brightness of his glory, and the express image  
“ of his person\*”, all the divine attributes were in *him* embodied, and made *visible*: his life was Deity exemplified. So whosoever would prove their union with Christ to be sincere, must exemplify, in the excellency of their conduct, those graces which are the fruits of a Christian spirit, “in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth †.” Thus, and thus only, the professing Christian is united with his Saviour, and his God.

Compared to the blessing of such an union, all the wealth and honour and power which worlds might give, sink into nothing. *Their gain must end. This abideth for ever*—enabling us in *life* to cast all our care upon God; to look towards *Him*, as our sure support and consolation in *death*; and in the *judgment-day* to trust in *Him*, as our great and merciful Redeemer. Such is the everlasting blessing of being “*One with God and Christ!*”

<sup>1</sup> Ephes. ii. 21.

<sup>2</sup> Isaiah xxviii. 16; and Ephes. ii. 20.

\* Heb. i. 3.

† Ephes. v. 9.



“is Jesus Christ <sup>1</sup>.” Keeping in view this comparison, no sooner has he laid a good foundation, than he labours to build a good superstructure; and adding whatsoever may ornament a building raised to the honour of God, he endeavours to form the whole according to the pattern set before him in Christ Jesus. Not satisfied, therefore, that the fundamental doctrine of the Gospel—a saving faith in the atonement, should be fixed deep in his heart; he adds thereto, as its appropriate superstructure, every good word and work, that men may *see* in him a holy temple to the Lord. He adorns his conduct with “whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report;” in order that others—won by the beauty of holiness—may be induced to imitate what they admire, be themselves an ornament to the religion they profess, and live to the glory of their Father which is in heaven <sup>2</sup>.

If then we be sincerely religious, we shall consider ourselves imperatively bound to a strict observance of the Christian pattern in *every* relation of life, before both God and man; and shall strive to fulfil our Christian obligation not only inwardly, by fervent devotion in serving God, but outwardly also, by an upright and honest line of conduct in our dealings with men.

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. iii. 11.

<sup>2</sup> Matth. v. 16. “Let your light so shine before men, that they may *see* your *good works*, and glorify your Father which is in Heaven.”

As members of the Church, we shall consider further, that God being ONE, his religion can be established only in the unity of the Spirit; for "as there is one body," and to each body "one spirit," so "are we called in one hope of our calling." There is "one Lord, one faith, one baptism<sup>1</sup>." Duly regulating our pious zeal, we shall take serious heed to the Apostle's warning, that there be no divisions among us. We shall not be carried away by every wind of doctrine, but "hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering." Above all, we shall not forsake "the assembling of ourselves together<sup>2</sup>;" but consider the Sabbath-day our holy Rest, and its service our hallowed Joy. We shall look to the word of God as our counsellor, to his Spirit as our comforter, and to prayer and devout communing with Him, as our best support and consolation; our only sure refuge in the needful time of trouble.

In social life also, the Christian strives to frame himself agreeably to the character of the chief corner-stone. A good disposition of his heart towards God, is followed by a due regulation of his temper towards man. To the inward grace of holiness is added the ornament of meekness and forbearance, with forgiveness of enemies, and fervent charity towards all men. Indeed, every part of his conduct towards his neighbour he endeavours to fashion according to Jesus Christ, the great pattern set before him, in order that "fitly framing together all the building"—taking heed that inward graces be accompanied by outward duties—he may "grow up unto a holy temple in the Lord<sup>3</sup>."

<sup>1</sup> Ephes. iv. 4, 5.<sup>2</sup> Heb. x. 23, 25.<sup>3</sup> Ephes. ii. 21.

In thus framing the soul to be a habitation meet for the Holy One of Israel, we must remember, that our blessed Lord allows no other proof of our fitness than a ready obedience. “If a man love me, he  
“will *keep my words*; and my Father will love him,  
“and we will come unto him, and *make our abode*  
“with him<sup>1</sup>.” With what earnest care then should we regulate our conduct, and purify our heart, lest God abide *not* with us! Without him we perish. When the true worship was neglected by his chosen Israel, their temple fell into the hands of the spoiler. If we are anxious that our souls, which the Apostle warns us “are the temple of the living God,” be preserved from the great spiritual despoiler, let us take heed to preserve the true worship; serving the Lord, in spirit, and in truth, living in holy communion with Him, and like the faithful of old, walking with Him: “as God hath said: I will *dwell* in them,  
“and *walk* in them; and *I* will be their *God*, and  
“*they* shall be my *people*<sup>2</sup>.”

Thus—O my reader!—thus build up thine own self: so shall thy God be glorified in thee; and thou shalt continue even in this lower world as a temple to his honour; till the happy hour come, when every good and faithful servant shall be as a temple in the city not made with hands—a city, which is eternal in the heavens—“whose builder  
“and maker is God<sup>3</sup>.”

<sup>1</sup> John xiv. 23.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Cor. vi. 16. Refer to a Note upon this subject in page 344.

<sup>3</sup> Heb. xi. 10.

## 85. ALL SAINTS' DAY.

*O ALMIGHTY GOD, who hast knit together thine elect in one communion and fellowship, in the mystical body of thy Son Christ our Lord; grant us grace so to follow thy blessed Saints in all virtuous and godly living, that we may come to those unspeakable joys, which thou hast prepared for them that unfeignedly love thee, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

IF the religion of Christ were to regulate the conduct of all those who profess themselves its followers, Christian society would be a communion of saints; and the worshippers of Jesus being spiritually united with *Him*, who is “the head of the body—“the Church<sup>1</sup>,” and “knit together in one communion and fellowship,” might, in virtue of such union, say with St. John, “truly our fellowship is “with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ<sup>2</sup>.” Our Saviour, in his last prayer for the welfare of his followers, prayed that this perfect union might be established among them; “Holy Father, keep “through thine own name those whom thou hast “given me, that *they* may be *one, as we are*<sup>3</sup>.”

Among the early Christians, this union was so entire, that one feeling seemed to actuate every variety of age, temper, and station. St. Luke's

<sup>1</sup> Col. i. 18.

<sup>2</sup> 1 John i. 3.

<sup>3</sup> John xvii. 11. Refer to a Note in page 441.

animated description of a Christian society in the first days of the Gospel, is equally instructive and affecting. "And all that believed were together, "and had all things common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, "as every man had need. And they, continuing "daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking "bread from house to house, did eat their meat with "gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, "and having favour with all the people<sup>1</sup>." So marked was their high spirit of charity one with another, that it won the unwilling admiration even of their enemies, "See, how these Christians love "one another<sup>2</sup>!"

<sup>1</sup> Acts ii. 44—47.

<sup>2</sup> This testimony in proof of the close bond of union which existed in the early Christian Church, a bond which even death could not divide, would be satisfactory from whatever quarter it came. It is rendered however truly valuable, as it is the unwary testimony, not of a partial friend, but a deep and cunning enemy; and *that* enemy, the Apostate Julian\*—a character, than which few furnish us with a more awful warning against dissimulation, pride, and impiety.

In a short, but romantic and eventful life, he was ever in extremes. Professing at one time the faith of Christ, and appearing zealous in the practice of every virtue—he was an example of benevolence, temperance, and piety. At the close of life—cruelty, and ambition, and hypocrisy, sunk him into wickedness and crime. He who under difficulties, and during anxious years of impending danger, had given fair promise of being a benefactor to mankind, no sooner found himself in the seat of imperial power, than he threw off the mask of hypocrisy under which he had long and successfully con-

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\* Julian, Emperor of Rome, was born in the year of Christ 331, and died in the year 363, at the early age of 32; having been fatally wounded by a javelin, in a conflict with the Persians, on the banks of the Tigris.



To keep the Corinthians in the same unity of the spirit, St. Paul encourages them by a promise of

cealed his real character; confessed that he had hitherto been a dissembler; abjured his profession of the Christian faith; ridiculed the ministration of those angels, in whose guardianship he had been wont to rejoice; mocked the majesty of the Lord Jehovah, and exultingly proclaimed himself an Apostate and a Heathen. Thenceforth Christians were the objects of his scorn and cruelty. Directing against them, with the subtlest art, his high and varied talents, he cloaked his cruelty under the specious pretext of encouraging consistency: he deprived the Churches of their means of support; and with assumed gravity assured the victims of his spoliation, that his object was, to give them the opportunity of practising that disregard of worldly riches, which their religion taught them to profess. And when he saw successive instances of the warmest attachment among Christians under their persecutions and trials, he would praise their noble spirit; urge the heathen worldlings around him to imitate their unanimity; and with the mockery of approbation, point his exhortations with the cruel taunt—"See how these *Christians* love "one another."

But God, though he suffer the individuals of his Church to be exposed occasionally to trials and persecutions; never either forsakes *them*, or leaves unprotected the *Church* itself. When, therefore, Julian set himself against the Most High, his daring was vain, as it was impious. Thus he determined to attempt rebuilding the temple of Jerusalem, for the purpose of invalidating prophecy; and he commanded the workmen to *begin* their labour: but no human power could compel them to finish it. Fire burst from the ground on which they laboured; and the signs and wonders which attended the attempt, whatever their exact nature may have been, were so evidently characterized as divine warnings, that none dared advance in the labour. Vain too were his ardent anticipations of *future* overthrow to the Church of Christ. His long-cherished hope of returning after an arduous and successful warfare, and then, with overwhelming force, extirpating Christianity, was frustrated by an early death. He who is supreme over the lives and fortunes of millions of mankind, cannot command one short hour for himself. A slave of ambition, which no power could satiate; a mover of cruelty, which no innocence could disarm; and a boaster of impiety,

divine blessing as its reward, and marks with peculiar energy his affectionate farewell to them; "Finally, " brethren, farewell. Be perfect; be of good comfort, " *be of one mind*; live in peace; and the *God* of love " and peace shall be *with you*<sup>1</sup>." This love of concord is a distinguishing mark of a sincere and humble Christian now. In society, as in religion, he takes heed to avoid divisions<sup>2</sup>: he remembers that no

which no mercies, however signal, however renewed, could either alarm or overcome—in the prime of manhood; at the height of his fame; in the hour of victory—with all his wisdom, all his power, all his soul arrayed against God—the wounded apostate dies!

What an awful warning to those who are active for evil! What a lesson to us all, to be humble, and contented in our station! Surely the Christian could no where be found, who would change his lowliest lot for that of the imperial and apostate Julian!

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. xiii. 11. and Ephes. iv. 3.

<sup>2</sup> *Chrysostom*, who was born about the year 347, when contrasting the danger of schism and the safety of unity, represents the spirit of peace under the beautiful image of a loving mother, nourishing and anxiously watching over her dependent charge. "This peace," saith he, "is our nurse and mother, soothing and cherishing us with the "most watchful care." So beneficial did that ardent and zealous servant of God consider the effects of unity, both in doctrine and practice, and so indispensably necessary to our growth in grace, as children of God! His observations upon this subject are so forcible, that I would refer my readers to the Sermon itself—52—upon Lent.

*Ignatius*, when remonstrating with the Ephesians upon their proneness to divisions, strikes with no common power at the root of that spirit, which instigates men to divide the Church of Christ—he shews that such divisions have their origin in *pride*; and he warns them to beware, lest by yielding to *pride*, and being so led to oppose the ministers and stewards of the word of God; they root out of their hearts, that *humility*, without which other graces lose their value, and Christianity becomes only a name. "It is profitable "therefore for you," he adds, "to live in an unblameable *unity*, that "so ye may have *fellowship* with God; and be like unto Christ; of "whom ye are members."

Now the authority of *Ignatius* is indisputable. He was a disciple

household, whether a Church, or other society, can stand safe, if divided against itself. In religion, therefore—if a minister, he “takes heed to *himself*,” “and to his doctrine,” and meddles not with other men’s matters: he interferes not with another’s charge; but has regard to “the ministry which he “has *received* to fulfil it:” if he be one of those ministered unto, he will pray for “grace to hear “meekly the word, receive it with pure affection, “bring forth the fruits of the Spirit,” and keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. In society—knowing that the peace of God will not abide where discord reigns; for God is justly designated as “the author of *peace*, and lover of *concord*<sup>1</sup>,” he seeks peace, and ensues it, and, as much as lieth in him, “lives peaceably with all men<sup>2</sup>.”

But thus to be united as a communion of saints upon earth, and by such union fitted for the communion of saints in heaven, is the result of our own

of St. John; and at so early a period in the Christian Church, as the year 68, was appointed to succeed severally St. Paul and St. Peter, as Bishop of Antioch in Syria. His monitions upon the proper regulations of the Church of Christ are especially valuable, not only as he uniformly professes himself directed by the Holy Scriptures, as the inspired word of God; but being an immediate successor of the Apostles themselves, he of course received from them exact directions in the future management of their Church. And it seems, that the members of the Apostolic Church were “especially to *beware of divisions*.”

Ignatius suffered martyrdom at Rome, in the year 107.

<sup>1</sup> See the second Collect in the morning service; where our Church rests her doctrine upon the authority of St. Paul. - 1 Cor. xiv. 33. “For God is not the author of confusion, but of *peace*.”

<sup>2</sup> Rom. xii. 18.

persevering labour, aided by the co-operation of the Spirit of God. We are therefore here instructed to pray for his “*grace*, so to follow his blessed saints “ in all virtuous and godly living, that we may come “ to the unspeakable joys which he has prepared for “ them that unfeignedly love him, through Jesus “ Christ our Lord.” Thus our Church ever holds fast sound doctrine! the more closely her sons—elect according to the Gospel—be “ knit together “ in one communion and fellowship, in the mystical “ body of Christ,” she requires them the more diligently “ to follow the blessed saints” in their course of active and humble piety. As Christ affirms that the ground of union between himself and his Father, was a willing conformity to his Father’s good pleasure, so our Church admits no other proof of our union with Christ, than our conformity to his will, and obedience to his commandments<sup>1</sup>. She teaches us that a Christian profession is nothing, unless we follow a Christian course; that faith in the atonement of the Saviour is vain, if our practice do not accord with his precepts: that a joyful hope standeth not sure, without “ all virtuous and godly living:” that he who would come to the “ unspeakable joys” of heaven, must remember, that these joys are “ prepared for them who *unfeignedly* love their God, “ through Jesus Christ his Son:” and that “ if we “ love Christ, we shall *keep his commandments*”—Christian morality, though utterly unable of itself to

<sup>1</sup> John viii. 29. “ And he that sent me is with me: the Father “ hath not left me alone; *for* I do always those things that please “ him.”

save us, being yet the appointed test of that faith, which *is* able to save our souls.

In contemplating the bright course of the saints now gone to their rest, let us at least *endeavour* to imitate, what we admire; however we may fail in attaining the same high excellency. *Their* glory was not in their own righteousness, but in the cross of Christ. The same cross may be our glory now. *Their* praise was *not* in *themselves*—but in the Gospel<sup>1</sup>. And the *same* Gospel is left to *us*, by a diligent use and due application of which, as a fountain of wisdom, and a source of consolation, *we* also may hope, each to gain at last, through the Redeemer's merits, praise of God; and be hailed with the welcome salutation—"Well done! good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord!" *Faithfulness* in the *use* of the talents entrusted to us, *not* their *number* will be the measure of our reward. *Neglect* of opportunity of spiritual improvement, *not* the *want* of it, will be the just ground of our condemnation<sup>2</sup>. Never must our courage fail us, because it is an arduous work to correct our hearts by the word of God, and bend our wills to his Spirit. St. Paul compares his spiritual life to a warfare; a continual struggle between good and evil. Yet he fought a good fight through Jesus Christ. So *our* weakness is made strength through the same Saviour, who ruleth over all. And when St. Paul recorded the success of his faith—"I can do all things through Christ, which strengtheneth

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. viii. 18.

<sup>2</sup> Matth. xxv. 11—31. Refer to the 13th Sunday after Trinity.



“ me ”—he left such record, not as excluding his weaker brethren, but rather as animating all to be guided by his example, to imitate his courage, and follow his steps; for the heavenly aid, by help of which even he conquered the evil of his heart, and won the crown of holiness, is equally free to the weakest of us all.

Encouraged then to a life of holiness by the example of the blessed saints; training ourselves to the angelic character by the habitual exercise of saintly duties; and fitting ourselves to the service of God hereafter in glory, by serving him here in the beauty of holiness—let us in patience possess our souls. The time of our *final* redemption draweth nigh; when the redeemed from sin—redeemed also from the grave, and victorious over death—shall see with unclouded vision the everlasting God in his majesty<sup>2</sup>, view in *Him* the once incarnate Jesus, and admitted into the glorious heaven, join there with saints and angels in one choral hymn of thanksgiving; “ the Lord our God is our Redeemer—  
“ hallelujah ! hallelujah ! hallelujah ! Amen.”

<sup>1</sup> Philip. iv. 13.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

HAVING thus, my reader, brought you to the conclusion of the Collects, it were time to say farewell. But I linger still. And who lingers not, when about to leave scenes of peace, where time flew but too swiftly, and every passing hour brought with it no other pain, than what arose from a conviction that it was past recal? my own cares were forgotten, as I endeavoured to administer to yours; and in leading you to the oracles of God, as to a second Eden, where even “the desert rejoices and blossoms as the rose,” I found for myself “every tree pleasant to sight and “good for food,” at once strengthening and refreshing me. My toil was my delight.

If from the perusal of these pages any reap improvement, instruction, or comfort; nay if one—only *one* careless soul—be induced to forsake his course of irreligion, worldliness, and pleasure; or if only one righteous be confirmed in his life of holiness, heavenly-mindedness, and peace, my labour will be more than repaid.

The work, however, I humbly commit to *Him* “without whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy;” and by whom even weakness is made strength, to the salvation of souls, through Jesus Christ our Lord.



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